TOWARDS

A TYPOLOGY OF LOVE DRAMAS

Through a comparison between some Chinese and other plays

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Ph D

The University of Edinburgh
1 September, 1995

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Date of Viva: **15th April, 1996** (Spring Holiday)

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to further elucidate the connotations of love as a philosophical, sociological and literary topic in drama. Comparing a number of plays, it suggests and elaborates various standards for a partial initial typology of love drama, concentrating on the dramaturgy, content and language styles of Chinese, Indian, German, English and French examples, thus casting the net widely to provide the broad range to complement and interact with my analytical detail.

This study is organised according an underlying chain of logical categories, not any chronological sequence of development, and explores and links the classifications of religious love, imperial and royal love, love freed from spatial and temporal bonds, and universal love. Proceeding in a basically empirical manner, this work, in intimate and indispensable involvement with the central examination of the love theme, also gives close and considerable attention to the effects of stylistic elements, such as the resort in certain plays to the imagery of beauty and sublimity as embodiments of the idea of love, the collective subconscious informing such aspects as the linguistic, rhetorical and animistic, the distortion of time and space, histrionic semiology, absurdity as a modernistic aesthetic category, the alienation effect in Classical Chinese theatre and Epic Theatre, and other key questions. The issue of mutual influences between China and the West is broached, judgements on the mixed impact from Western drama theory on the Chinese are suggested, and the widely neglected and highly significant problem of the influence of Chinese drama on Europe and America is highlighted, while the dramaturgical Westernisation of China in the name of modernisation, crucially involving the treatment of love, is also extensively probed and analysed.

PREFACE

The theme of this thesis was closely bound up with my life and interests even before I formally commenced my present research work on it. It is one that has been right at the heart of China's extreme swings of ideological and social mood over the past decades, and much of my youth was spent during an era when love in its general historical definitions was under more adverse pressure than it has perhaps ever been in the course of mankind's development. As a student and lecturer of aesthetics and literary criticism in The University of Henan, China, it naturally also came within my range of interests, and I published specific studies in Chinese on it.

While my background has beyond doubt strongly contributed towards my extra interest, there are, however, more cogent reasons than purely personal ones for studying this subject, since it has always been so prominent in human life and literature. The majority of Chinese dramas through the ages concern love as surely must a large proportion of the dramas of other cultures. Drama has, moreover, been a major aspect of Chinese civilisation, deeply influencing all strata of society.

The pervasiveness of the theme in life and literature led me to expect that when I set out upon my research into love in drama I would discover the soil extensively tilled, and a plethora of thoroughgoing writings available. This, to my surprise, was far from the case. While there are articles and chapters of insight, there seems to be a scarcity of head-on studies of any real length. In wondering why this should be so, or how it can be so, one should bear in mind, for instance, that in China the climate of politics has in recent times often discouraged open treatment of this topic, that elsewhere it has no doubt been so taken for granted that whole monographs on it have not been considered a matter of urgency, and that, in an area that cries out for the extra light of the inter-cultural approach, comparative studies have until the recent surge of translation, research and compilation of reference works been greatly inhibited.

The relative absence of prior secondary studies has been both an initial hindrance and a subsequent stimulus to me. There have been few reliable springboards, but after I had struggled, undergoing the inevitable despondence and euphorias, towards my own conclusions there was a pleasing freedom of novel choice, and the challenge was all the greater. The breadth of geographical and cultural differences provides the indispensable regulators for the important detail, and although all studies on such a vast topic can only be but a beginning, the attempt has been a rewarding one.

Coming to Edinburgh, I have found that the city and learning environment themselves have by their newness, uniqueness and detachment from my own background encouraged a thawing of ideas and the opening of new vistas. I have been able to draw inspiration from Dr. William Dolby's internationally known expertise in the realm of Chinese drama, and would like here to thank him for his insights and approachability, Neil Munro, John Whitfield for their valuable criticism, and likewise Julian Upton and Jo Hutton, for all their warm goodwill, help and encouragement.

Yubin He
Edinburgh, 1 September, 1995.

Towards a Typology of Love Dramas

Through a comparison between some Chinese and other plays

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

A striking difficulty in the kind of cross-cultural studies here embarked upon is the limitedness of reference materials[1] and the very scanty availability of prior discussions, especially with regard to the matter of similarities[2] in an empirical sense. This difficulty is occasioned mainly by the mere lack of initiatives in the realm of active cultural communication and exchange, that is to say from human postures of alienation rather than from isolations arising from Nature. The unfavourable scholastic situation and the limited achievements, which are often complementary aspects, are largely governed by the interaction of three unfavourable forces: the ideological, the methodological and the geographical. More vitally, a trinity of these three elements has been fostering a psychology of indolence that takes the existing situation for granted and assumes that there is no hurry to improve it. For some, comparative studies spanning the oriental and occidental, ancient and modern, are no more than a distant horizon, which, while undeniably existing and beckoning tantalisingly, even recedes with each step that one takes to approach it; some exaggerate the differences and ignore the similarities; some actually hold such a negative attitude toward the like comparative studies for covering so wide a temporal and geographical span as to deem them nigh on invalid. Yet the rendering precise of the particular is infeasible without the exploration of the general, the broad sweep and the minute detail being mutually interdependent in all genuine scholarship, and for that reason I shall examine an expansive sweep of drama, tending to emphasise objective dramatic phenomena concerning inter-cultural similarities that have existed without direct actual influence, and concentrating particularly of love plays of certain specific types.

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Firstly, let us dwell for a moment on the significance and applicability of comparative studies to drama , both Chinese and foreign.

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[1] On the back cover of *Studies in Chinese-Western Comparative Drama* (a collection of a few essays by different contributors; Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990) is written: "This collection of essays on Chinese-Western comparative drama is the first of its kind of ever written in English."

[2] Xu Shuofang says: "There has been such a long-time isolation between the developments of Chinese and European literature, that it has been, we must say, a flaw of history." See his *Lun Tang Xianzu ji qita* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1983), p. 73.

According to the available materials, drama was rather a late genre to arrive in the history of Chinese arts. Its emergence and taking shape coincided with the importation of Buddhism and some genres of Buddhist literature from India, and it no doubt absorbed Buddhist ideas and stories, both of which make up such a considerable proportion of the content of drama that some scholars even hold that Chinese drama originated from Sanskrit drama. It is hard to agree with this argument and view Chinese drama as largely imported, grafted on, from a foreign country rather than national and native. All the same, this assumption strikingly emphasises the exotic and reminds us to explore along comparative lines.

From its birth, Chinese drama grew well, in its own manner and favoured by the native cultural and social climate, until the turn of this century, when it was affected with violent impact by the techniques and thematic elements alike of Western drama. One of the most notable examples of the new developments was the first "spoken drama", a brand-new style, plays of which were staged by the Spring Willow Society (Chunliushe), an overseas students society, in Tokyo in 1907, its first production, called *Camellia Maid* (*Chahua nü*), being a Chinese version of Dumas's *La Dame aux camèlias*.[3] Although Westernisation at that time was by no means confined to drama, little if anything else was influenced to the same extent, and both the achievements and repercussions of its innovations are still now felt strongly.

The third tide of exotic impact on Chinese drama arose in the Cultural Revolution, and Model Drama in a certain sense represented the greatest degree of Westernisation of Chinese traditional drama.[4] This kind of Westernisation paralleled the modernisation of the same period, both nominally being inspired by Mao's doctrine on the proper attitude that should be adopted towards China's cultural legacy and foreign cultural achievements: "Make the ancient serve the present, make the foreign serve China" (*Gu wei jin yong, yang wei zhong yong*). Peking Opera which symbolised the essence of

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[3] Cf. A. C. Scott, *Literature and the Arts in Twentieth Century China*, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 36. However, Gilbert C. F. Fong says: "The first performance of the new 'spoken drama' (*hua-chü*), staged by a group of overseas Chinese students in Tokyo in 1907, was an adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*". (*Western Influence and the Rise of Modern Chinese Drama*, op. cit., p. 1). Also cf. Tian Han, *Road and Anticipation of the artistic development of Chinese Spoken Drama*: "In 1907, one year after the master of modern drama died, Zeng Xiaogu, Li Xishuang and other overseas students in Japan performed in Tokyo two acts of *La Dame aux camélias* by Dumas junior, . . . What exerted even greater influence was *Heinu yutianlu* [adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*] staged in the same year." *Zhongguo huaju-yishu fazhan-de lujing he zhanwang*, in Tian Han & others, *Zhongguo huaju-yundong wushi-zhounian shiliao-ji* (Peking: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1958), p. 4.

[4] "Although the Chinese theatre has exerted some influence in the West," says Colin Mackerras, "the impact of the Western theatre of China has been much greater, and the modern Chinese drama owes a great deal to European models. . . . Even the revolutionary plays show Western influence to a marked degree." *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p. 200.

Chinese theatre and performing arts underwent weighty reforms in the direction of Westernisation: Western orchestra replaced the traditional and national, music composition became symphonic with Western harmony and arrangement, scenery and lighting kept even closer to naturalism, and textual structure also approached the West. The authorities never recognised these changes as Westernisation, claiming to make the foreign serve China, yet by comparison with classical Chinese drama, the new Model Drama (*yangbanxi*) in a large number of aspects sidelined its Chinese essence and was assimilated by exotic dramaturgy, as is typified by the experiments of *"Red Lantern" with the Piano Music* (*Gangqin banchang "Hongdengji"*) and *"Sha Family Waterway" Symphonised* (*Jiaoxiangyinyue Shajiabang*). In such cases, China, ironically, served the foreign instead of vice-versa.

The Westernisation is still going on nowadays, partly in the name of reform and innovation. Although it has made some accomplishments, and been recognised as worthwhile by the part of the audiences, it is still too early to apportion a general evaluation, and even academically premature to assay definitive assessments of the particular.[5]

It is perhaps generally beneficial and advantageous for a nation to open itself to influences from foreign culture, and in this respect, the exotic effects on Chinese drama have been basically of positive value. That is only one side of the coin, however: the other reveals detrimental influences and unfavourable side-effects.

On the positive side, as far as twentieth-century developments are concerned, greatly influenced by Western dramaturgy, a new genre termed Spoken Drama came into being, which enriched and enlarged the Chinese conception of drama. In another development, however, this new born child caused split and conflict within Chinese drama, in its theory and its practice alike. Ever since this schism, Chinese drama has diverged along several different paths and rarely converged again, there having for instance been a major confrontation between the traditional opera-like drama and the imported one. Moreover, the previous Chinese term for "drama" (*xiju*) acquired several alternatives, such as Traditional Drama (*chuantongxi*), Regional Drama (*difangxi*), Costumed Drama (*guzhuangxi*)[6], Old Drama (*jiuju*), and Classical Drama (*gudianxi*). To avoid ambiguity, two subconceptual terms were coined: *xiqu* ("play with singing")

[5] "Throughout the 1980's," says Elizabeth Wichmann: "almost all productions of new plays have involved innovations in at least one of the main areas -- makeup, costume, scenery, staging, music, acting, and directing. Most innovations are based upon regional, popular, or foreign techniques." See E. Wichmann, "Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance", *The Drama Review*, vol. 34, no. 1, Spring 1990, p. 148.

[6] As opposed to *shizhuangxi* ("modern-costume drama").

referring to traditional Chinese styles of drama, and *huaju* (Spoken Drama) referring to the exotic style.

More harmful than any foreign influences might or might not of themselves be to the flourishing of Chinese theatre this century has been the chaos occasioned by pseudo-logical analyses of, and prejudices towards, traditional-style Chinese drama which has in fact at times been designated "less civilised" or "uncivilised", the exotic drama being referred to as "civilised drama" (*wenmingxi*)[7] or "cultural drama" (*wenhuaxi*) or "enlightened drama" (*kaimingxi*) or "drama for literati" (*wenshiju*).[8] Epithets like "native" or "indigenous", which had an obvious derogatory vein, were applied to it at times, and even today it is still sometimes smered at as "the medieval museum" (*zhongshiji bowuguan*), such scorn being typical of a certain tendency towards national self-depreciation

History has come to realise the conceptual gulf between these two opposite kinds of drama, the Chinese traditional and the imported exotic style. While gulfs in themselves are far from necessarily harmful, the denigration of one body of culture in favour of another may pre-empt fruitful interactions and be wasteful of probable sources of enduring inspiration, and attempts have accordingly been made to improve the situation, the efforts to this end lying mainly in theatrical practice which tries to bridge the gap between the intrinsic Chinese qualities and the foreign influences. In this way, *geju*, as a new type of "Chinese opera", came into being, its emergence involving conscious experiment and reform. Although called "opera", it is actually a form of drama, having its roots very much in native Chinese dramatic tradition rather than being a graft from the Western opera. The reason for the use of such a name is that, on the surface it has simplified the acting element, which in traditional drama is highly artistic and sophisticated, and has abandoned conventionalised composition and region-associated

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[7] This term shortly became derogatory because of the very limited achievement of this experiment. One of the major reasons for its failure was, in my opinion, ignorance of Chinese theatrical tradition. Cf. Ouyang Yuqian: "For as much as the last thirty years, Civilised Drama has always been a laughing stock. Any thing onstage poor, exaggerated or careless and somewhat running wild is termed 'Civilised Drama'. Is that fair? No. . . . 'Civilised New Drama (*wenming-xinxi*)' was not originally derogatory, but on the contrary, was a term of praise. The early Spoken Drama troupes referred to their works as 'New Drama (*xinxi*)' only, and nobody called them Civilised New Drama (*wenmingxinxi*). New Drama means the drama of a new type, as opposed to Old Drama (*jiuxi*), and the compound *wenming* means 'progressive (*jinbu*)' or 'advanced (*xianjin*)'. The correct explanation of Civilised New Drama is 'progressive and new drama (*jinbu-de xin-de xiju*).' This term perhaps first appeared in the newspapers at that time, and later it became a common term current in society, and simplified as Civilised Drama (*wenmingxi*)." Ouyang Yuqian, "Tan Wenmingxi", in Tian Han & others (eds.), *Zhongguo huaju-yundong wushi-zhounian shiliao-ji* (Peking: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1958), pp. 48-9.

[8] Both "Enlightened Drama (*kaimingxi*)" and "Literati Drama (*wenshiju*)" refer to the early Chinese spoken drama in Taiwan. Cf. Ma Sen, "*Taiwan zaoqi xinju de fazhan*", in his *Zhongguo xiandai xiju de liangdu xichao* (Taipei: Wenhua-Shenghuo-Xinzhi Chubanshe,1991), p. 201.

music, so that it is, for these reasons, coincidentally closer to Western opera than is the traditional style of Chinese drama. All the same, it still differs from Western opera (for instance, in having a lot of dialogue), while also being very different from Spoken Drama in nature since basically native.[9]

The theatrical reforms and the creation of the new opera show a tendency to try to reconcile the unfruitful aspects of antagonism between the native and the exotic, but unfortunately, neither endeavour has achieved very much, so that the gap is not yet filled. In a certain sense, the intrinsic and complex conditions of development of Chinese drama continue to resist the outside impact. Chinese drama has not truly assimilated the Western importation, and is also seemingly unlikely either to be wholly assimilated by the latter. In some ways that can present real predicaments.

Analysis should in theory contribute to a solution of problems occasioned by the above conflict and, if it is to do so, must position itself at the meeting-points rather than keeping its distance from the very matter of the meeting. For this reason my thesis pursues cross-dramatic studies.

Empirical investigation has a role to play. I may firstly point out that while there have been some works conducting general comparative surveys, (not specifically on the topic of love), to my knowledge there has as yet been no work of truly solid comparison. Numerous articles have been published, but, being articles, in terms of quantity alone cannot be seen as satisfactory, and indeed, were all these articles viewed collectively, their lack of internal consistency and their mutual contradictions would be brought more fully to light -- they leave unsolved disagreements and mutually nullify each other by unsubstantiated contrary views. Taking this into consideration, I have felt the need to do adopt a somewhat different approach -- to try, by classifying love into categories, followed by more minute analysis, to find universal patterns underlying the apparent haze of obscurity, and in pattern to seek more solidity and clarity.

Secondly, I have felt that it is time to turn away from theoretical reductionisms and get down to empirical demonstration. Such an approach is preferred in the best of Western scholarships and the premises hopefully arising from it would similarly make more sense to recent Chinese scholarly society as far as academic style and methodology are concerned. For several years before the Tiananmen Incident of 1989, Chinese people had talked a great deal about various *isms* in various fields, but failed to obtain adequate evidence to support the arguments put forward by the *isms*. Scholars of my generation often went into raptures as they constructed this or that *ism*, but fell silent on the matter

[9] The term *geju* is also used for purely Western opera.

of empirical observation. To counteract this general fashion and my particular background, I shall try to base my arguments on tangible facts as much as possible. In making an attempt along such lines, it has proven difficult to find enough source materials which are appropriate for comparison or bear convincing resemblance or meaningful difference, but the attempt has entailed many incidental gains, which are in themselves worth some space. Apart from ideas centrally concerned with love, I have gained other insights, on matters such as: the similarities of growth between the development of Homer's epics into Greek drama and that of the "various-keys ballad" (*zhugongdiao*), sometimes called a "chantefable", into Chinese drama; the affinities between Greek masks and Chinese painted faces; the different aesthetics perceived by comparing the Yuan drama *Orphan of the Zhao Family* and Voltaire's *The Chinese Orphan* derived from it; the revelations obtained by modern Western drama, in such matters as the revolution of scenery and the simultaneous reaction against naturalism, inspired by oriental arts and Chinese theatre; and the Chinese elements in Wagner's ideas of "music drama" and their common source in the folkloric essence. Such foci of study have not to my knowledge been hitherto accorded much concentrated attention.

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Secondly, as my topic is closely concerned with love, a crucial object of consideration is to what extent the patterns of love in life's reality coincide or otherwise with those of the stage. Love is variously conceptualised in society and accordingly assumes various patterns in reality. And moving on from reality to stage, we find that on the latter the real patterns are re-cast and new dramatic categories are formed. These new categories are not merely mirrors passively reflecting reality, but take an active part in re-informing society and re-forming reality.

When love is presented on stage, interpretation of the phenomena is also made, the process in this respect having much similarity to a sociological study of love. But when love is dealt with by dramaturgy, not only does it gain an interpretation, but its phenomenal state is reshaped and even deformed, for instance where the universal pattern of love is made to transcend time and space, in such cases as love in the afterlife or predestined marriage, love in dream or in the spiritual realm, para-romantic love beyond physical reality, and so on. These themes are highly subjective in treatment, alienating themselves from the phenomenal world, for their meaning is contained in their rearrangement of general reality rather than in general reality *per se*.

To reshape or distort reality might be readily and simply thought to be a matter of dramaturgic treatment only, whereas, even if only as an artistic treatment, such action is still based on the innate and latent logic of general reality which has been endowed with

an appropriate form. It is precisely herein that the mission of arts lies-- not only to reflect life and society, but far more importantly, to elucidate whatever is thus reflected in all manner of ways. The assumption that this is the case may serve to reveal the rational connection between form and content in terms of thematic logic and formal artistry alike.

I offer below some explanations of the procedures and stances that I adopt for my analyses.

Regarding classification, the actual patterns in general reality are the first matter to consider. Where it follows these, love on the stage is basically a reflection of life with some necessary fine-tuning. Although there are patterns that exist in actual fact across both the East and West, yet it often requires a painstaking search to find appropriate pairs of comparable dramatic works. In accordance with the available material, I am attempting to categorise the plays in the following ways, setting up various models and assumptions to be confirmed or modified:

1. **Classification by theme**

a) **Archetypal love**:

This kind of love and the play with such subject matter provide a fundamental pattern for all other patterns, and in this sense it is called "archetypal" or prototypal. The works of this pattern should, in my view, be of much clarity and great capacity for revealing the concept of love, and the protagonists should be at the level of human paragons and the conflicts strikingly expressive and representative, and above all, the themes should be well known ones, even ones that have become part of folklore or general tradition. Chosen here for examination are *Liang Shanbo and Prime Beauty* (*Liang Shanbo he Zhu Yingtai*) and *Romeo and Juliet.* The pairs of protagonists in both are coincidentally eponymous, their names ringing through the ages as the epitomes of romantic relationship.

b) **Sullied sex and flawed female**:

This pattern concerns the love that occurs in the pleasure-house with a harlot or courtesan. It is a common subject in Chinese drama, and a similar motif is also found in Western theatre. Such plays show the rapport between affection and sexuality which are disciplined but complementary and interwoven as well, and show how the essence of humanity embodied in love is damaged by or revives the unfavourable social conditions.

c) **Love versus religion**:

Mind versus body is a common motif in the Western literature, but less common in China. In Chinese drama, most plays promote secular happiness and enjoyment with only a faint ring of Epicureanism. Nevertheless, Chinese plays including some on religious asceticism are to be found to match with their Western counterparts. Revealing the conflicts between secular love and religious taboo, such plays elucidate the meaning of life at the level of philosophy.

d) **Imperial and royal love**:

By the very height of its social location and the critical nature of its political location, this kind of love has special qualities of its own. In Chinese drama, although the subject matter of this pattern is not abundant but indeed quite rare, the motifs, of a very limited range, have been frequently repeated and explored. The main motif derives from two historical facts to which legendary factors have been added, the most salient examples being those of the love between an emperor of the Han dynasty with his concubine Bright Lady (Wang Zhaojun), and the romance of an emperor of Tang dynasty with his favourite concubine Jade Bracelet (Yang Yuhuan). These same topics have been chewed over and over by scores of plays. Even now, this motif has not lost its charm and remains appealing, television series and other entertainment and literary genres still taking interest in it. I feel it intellectually important to probe the Chinese national psychology in this matter, it having been to a great extent fostered and nourished by this kind of drama, as well of course as by other cultural and ethical influences, and side-issues relating to morality, hypocrisy and even political regimes also arise in the course of such considerations. In the Western theatrical world, there is an even more limited number of prominent plays concerning royal love, out of which I have principally selected an English play entitled *Alexander and Campaspe* (by John Lilly), while also reflecting on others such as *Antony and Cleopatra* (by Shakespeare), but giving my main attention to the two dramas *Palace of Eternal Life* (by Hong Sheng) and *Shakuntala* (by Kalidasa), respectively the most representative pieces of those most representative oriental nations, China and India,[10] and aiming to probe forth distinctive Eastern characteristics through a comparison of the two, incidentally also so as to provide some circumstantial insight into the question of the origin of Chinese drama and its relationship with Indian drama.

[10] The former represents the maturity of classical Chinese drama, while the latter "represents not only Kalidasa at his best but also the full flowering of Sanskrit drama", and "for over two hundred years the play has been a test of good acting." See Balwant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962), pp. 30 & 31.

2. **Categorisation by formal standards**:

When a play is characterised by technicalities which greatly affect and alter its subject matter, essentially in serving the theme, it falls into another category, such as one of the following:

e) **Love involving mistaken identity**:

This type is basically comical, the traits of humour and upheaval in the plot being created by the characters' mistaken relationships which are caused by misidentification. In such plots, it is often the case that characters in the play are ignorant of the mistake, while the audience outside the play sees it clearly. This treatment contributes subtly and effectively to both the stage-world and the audience-world: on-stage, the mistakes and confusion cause the contradictions and conflicts, which require some kind of clarification and reconciliation and thus serve as a driving force to impel the incidents; and to the audience who have realised the problem, they evoke the feeling of superiority over the absurdity of the characters and therefore produce a comical feeling and a sense of humour.

In Elizabethan times, with Shakespeare for instance, this technique is widely used, the play often resorting to motifs such as twins and disguise, simply to achieve the dual purposes indicated above. As early as Plautus and up to Goldoni or Goldsmith, we find that it holds universal appeal for the Western theatre. Although it does not appeal to Chinese drama so much, yet as a pattern of technique, it does exist, hidden or obvious. The Chinese drama entitled *Wonderful Double Meeting* (*Qi shuang hui*) might be paired with Goldoni's *The Venetian Twins*, and others, for example *Moon Worship Pavilion* (*Baiyue-ting*, by Shi Hui) and *Qiu Hu Dallies with His Wife* (*Qiu Hu xiqi*, by Shi Jubao) with works of Shakespeare and Goldsmith, to highlight the differences underlying the general resemblances.

f) **Love beyond the realm of normal reality**:

Dramatic subject-matter can be manipulated at will to fit the plot, and is sometimes so reshaped that it can be no longer held to remain in the domain of ordinary reality or in accord with normal logic. In such cases, the subject-matter enters another dimension and becomes supernatural on the surface but ultra-realistic in essence. In both Chinese and Western theatrical worlds such plays are readily to hand.

In this category there is discernible a variation or sub-category -- the dream play which seems in the middle of the realistic and the supernatural. As a dream, it is a perfectly natural and real phenomenon, but in its substance it lacks truth and ordinary

rationality. Nevertheless, by its superficial absurdity it may reflect ultra truths of the human sub-conscious and indeed patent realities of the world.

So the dream play, as discussed above, is a significant type, well deserving of analysis and exposition. It can assume various forms, and switches freely between the two opposing realms. It can locate reality in the supernatural, and vice versa. This unusual fluidity and convertibility alone readily inspire one's especial enthusiasm for the task of comparing dream plays in China and the West.

g) **Love plays with innovative co-ordinates of time and space**:

In seeking to expound the universality of its theme, a playwright may feel it difficult to locate his plot in the existing world of ordinary reality and by entering a mythical, immortal or dream dimension, may still unfold its essential ideas in the objective world but with a rearranged pattern and sequence of time and space, thus creating new co-ordinates for them. With these new co-ordinates, every part of the matter is re-defined in accordance with the new relative positions of the two to one another. Because of this new conception of time and space, historical personalities, fictional figures, legendary heroes who are otherwise distant and hitherto disconnected from each other, can be called on-stage and juxtaposed. Transcending the limits of space and time, these plays can easily express absolute notions concerning human destiny. One such drama is *Golden Lotus* (*Pan Jinlian*), a contemporary Chinese play, which by chance has a convenient contemporary English counterpart for comparison, *Top Girls*.

3. **Subsidiary and referential discussions**:

Love in the sexual sense, is often held to be the sublimest of human feelings. Whether such is true or not, love is closely related to other kinds of affection, including the natural (maternal, etc.) and the social alike. Love cannot be something in itself detached from its foundations, but on the contrary, is deeply rooted in and derives nourishment, good and bad, from its social soil. In this respect, the Cultural Revolution period of Chinese history provides insights into negative attitudes to love: love then between man and woman was forbidden or suppressed, and indeed love between person and person was frowned upon, animosity being deliberately fostered as a part of policy. When we apply our comprehension of this circumstance more widely to Chinese history, we can see more plainly that the reason why love drama has generally been so vigorous is partly that Chinese society is basically humanitarian, and that therefore when humanity is maltreated, it is often love that has been the first thing to be abused. In the light of this insight, I am in passing occasionally tempted to study plays on asexual love, to reinforce my main concepts concerning on the theme of love. I do so under the following heading:

h) **Plays about love in general sense**:

For this I compare *Chalk Circle* (*Hui-lan ji*) by Li Xingdao, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht. The former explicitly served as a model for the latter, the latter in essence being an adaptation of it, although one set in a very different locale with characters in non-Chinese costumes and with different incidents making up its plot. Along the same humanitarian lines and with the same pattern of subject-matter, the Chinese play emphasised the power of maternal love. Brecht, however, reverses the result of the plot and thereby elevates the importance of social feelings far above natural blood relationships. Concerning this aspect, another Yuan drama, *Dream of the Butterflies* (*Hudie meng*) by Guan Hanqing, serves as further reference. It tells the story of how a mother sacrifices her own son for the sake of her adopted son, its finale likewise being very close to that of Brecht's play. Regardless of the separate times and diversity of cultural backgrounds, these plays share the essential common features: Brecht obtained inspiration from the play *The Chalk Circle*, which, as a literary motif, bears highly artistic and ideological value, and in turn, he provides a variation that constitutes the direct opposite of its theme, but, fascinatingly, this alteration in turn strongly resembles another Chinese theme, that of *Dream of the Butterflies*. Thus, whatever the extent to which he has been actually affected by Chinese dramaturgy, the ideas and techniques in Brecht's *Caucasian Circle* have existed as much as centuries earlier in China, in Yuan drama.

These plays distinguish between natural affinity and social feeling, and the ones which favour the latter stress moral justice, in Chinese often referred as *yi*, "righteousness", which is terminologically the opposite of *qing*, "affection", "love", but also logically implies affection in many ways. This duality resoundingly echoes the dual sense of sexual love which is an organic combination of natural inclination and social agreement.

i) **Affection versus "righteousness"**:

In the three plays above, affection (*qing*) is differentiated from righteousness (*yi*), but they are still reconcilable and complementary. This mutuality has led naturally to the employment in drama of another pattern which not only distinguishes affection and righteousness but also makes them opposite, if not indeed contrary, to each other. Concerning this second pattern, *Orphan of the Zhao Family* (*Zhaoshi guer*) by Ji Junxiang) may be studied in comparison with the French adaptation of it and the English

re-adaptation.[11] It is important to perceive that the concept of "righteousness" is a vital category in Chinese ethics and virtue, but that it can be and has been, all too easily, misinterpreted in a naive fashion or misused through ill-intent, in this latter case functioning as an excuse to devalue soft affection and promote heartlessness or lack of feeling. In old times it could be invoked to promote "loyalty" to emperor, while nowadays it can be diverted into propaganda purposes that demand people sacrifice personal love for what are referred to by such terms as "duty" and "obligation", the Cultural Revolution with its Model Drama providing grave and explicit lessons in this latter respect. The psychological ambivalence and theoretical paradox inherent in the relationship between the Chinese concepts "affection" and "righteousness" have long been present and the cause of much trouble and indeed disaster, and they deserve our close attention and mental application in order that some closer appreciation may be obtained of the underlying interplay between the individual and the universal, between personal romance and social history.

This complex topic involves the broadest and most subtle aspects of the human condition, yet the complexity of it hardly excuses the signal scholastic neglect of it or fluidity s some initial broaching of such a formidable but exciting task. This study seeks to take a considerable step further along the road towards elucidation of the topic, and contribute not only to theatrical historiography but also both to culture-specific and intra-cultural understanding.

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[11] *The Orphan of the Zhao Family* (*Zhaoshi guer* by Ji Junxiang) once exerted appeal all over Europe, in 1740s and 1750s. There were at least seven early translations and adaptations in European languages, as follows:

1. Translation by Joseph Prémare (1667-1735, French missionary, Chinese name Ma Ruose), being vastly abridged.
2. Translation by John Watts (British, published in 1736).
3. Translation of Jean Baptiste du Halde's *Description de la Chine*, by Edward Cave (British, published during 1738-1741). *Description de la Chine* contains Joseph Prémare's translation.
4. German translation, 1773.
5. Russian translation, 1748.
6. Translation by Thomas Percy (British, published in 1762).
7. *The Chinese Orphan: A Historical Tragedy*, English adaptation by William Hatchett (British, published in 1741).
8. The adaptation by Voltaire (1694-1778) was completed in 1775 and staged in the same year.
9. *Orphan of China* (1756), adaptation by Arthur Murphey (first staged in 1759).
10. Opera version by Metastasio (1698-1782, Italian).
11. Full translation by Stanislaus Julien (French, 1799-1873, Chinese name Rulian, published in 1834, Paris).
12. Translation by Alan L. Wong (published in 1793, London).

Apart from the above, there were some part translations. This play has exercised an influence on various other European literary figures, such as *Elpenor* by Goethe, for instance. Cf. Wang Lin'a & Du Weimo, "*Zhao-shi guer* zai Ouzhou", in *Xiqu yanjiu*, No. 11 (Peking: Wenhua Yishu Chubanshe, 1984); also cf. J. I. Crump, *Chinese Theatre in the Days of Kublai Khan* (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 35.

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In order to further emphasise the importance of the topic, by setting its in its context and thus involving the implications of that setting, something should be said at this point concerning the status, past and present, of Chinese drama and the significance of its study.

Drama has enjoyed a singularly important position in the society of China in both the historical past and recent times, and in terms of both popular culture[12] and serious literature[13], at some periods providing vital indicators to China's entertainment world, literary and histrionic arts, many wider aspects of culture and indeed even politics. It "has always been a medium most suited to the creation and building up of ethical imagery in the popular mind."[14] Perhaps the extreme or most obvious example of its relevance to society and politics in general has been seen in the theatre of the Cultural Revolution era, when it had multifarious effects on both private affairs and political events, and monopolised the artistic field of that period. During that time, many genres of art and literature were largely marginalised, oppressed, and in a huge proportion of cases abandoned or forbidden. Feature film production was banned for around eight years from 1966 till 1974 when the first new film, entitled *The Scouts*, was allowed to appear. Chinese comical dualogue (*xiangsheng*), one of the most popular arts and entertainments, went nearly extinct, the first one of the period showing its face in 1972.[15]

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[12] W. Dolby says: "For many centuries the varied fascinations of Chinese drama have enthralled all levels of society and all kinds of people. Peasant and emperor, commoner and king, statesman and scholar, general and soldier have acted in plays and delighted in plays. Many Chinese have also been infuriated by plays, and tried to shun or suppress them, but none has ever reasonably been able to ignore them." *A History of Chinese Drama* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), p. ix.

[13] Some Chinese scholars have groundlessly assumed that traditional Chinese drama has been determined by actors rather than playwrights, and therefore that its literary value is very limited, and they also have also imagined that the West stands in sharp contrast to this situation (see Ma Sen, *Zhongguo xiandai xiju de liangdu xichao*, Taipei: Wenhua-Shenghuo-Xinzhi Chubanshe, 1991). Lin Yutang in contrast, however, declared: "Because Chinese dramatic composition happened to be largely poetry, it was accepted as literature on a higher level than novels, and almost on a par with the T'ang lyrics. Scholars were less ashamed to be known as writing dramatic works than writing novels. On the whole, the authorship of drama was not anonymous or subject to debate like the authorship of novels." See Lin Yutang, "Literary Life", in his *My Country and My People* (William Heinemann Ltd & Readers' Union Lit, 1938), p. 245.

[14] Colin Mackerras & Elizabeth Wichmann, "Introduction", in *Chinese Theatre: From its origin to the present day*, edited by Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p. 4.

[15] Performed by Ma Ji and Tang Jiezhong.

As for novel, that weighty genre, there was a gap between 1966 and 1971 during which not a single work was published (the last novel entitled *The Ode to Ouyang Hai* (*Ouyang Hai zhi ge*) marked the termination of the publishing of long fiction, still being published at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution,[16] while the first novel to emerge after a long silence was *The Fighting History of Hongnan* (*Hongnan zuozhan shi*). Even music suffered a similar fate. There was a gap from around the end of 1968, when the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was convened, until 1972 when the album entitled *New Songs in the Battle Ground* (*Zhandi xinge*) was published, during which there were hardly any officially recognised new musical compositions or songs. Nevertheless, drama was always the favourite of the authorities for what performances there were. It was the leading, dominant artistic category[17], and its fate was tightly entangled with state politics. For example, the onset of the Cultural Revolution was signalled by the "reform" of Peking drama which symbolised a "revolution" in the fields both of ideology and the arts. For around ten years, it remained the most prominent artistic category, far more prevalent than any other.

In this respect, at least the total survival of all drama was not under immediate threat, but this "safety" was ironic in that was interfered with more than any other genre of entertainment and more violently. From being a vigorous form, it was treated as a virtual corpse lingering on from ancient society, and placed in the political clinic, subjected to all manner of drastic operations, the result of which was gross deformation to suit the perceived practical and power needs of the prevalent politics. Thus the new drama was shaped by short-term human decisions and dictatorial power rather than growing out of any natural laws of art. For all its sensational aspects this Model Drama (*yangbanxi*)[18] was in the end to prove short-lived. History has witnessed its decline along with the regime that and the political faction that fostered it, since when it has lingered in most depressed circumstances. Nowadays there still remains a considerable following for it, and a whole set of video and audio tapes has been republished many times, selling very

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[16] The last edition of this novel was published in April, 1966, by Renminwenxue Chubanshe, based on the 2nd edition by Jiefangjun Wenyi Chubanshe. See *Ouyang Hai zhi ge* (Peking: Renminwenxue Chubanshe, 1966).

[17] Cf. this ambiguous remark by G. L. Anderson: "Only two of the great civilizations of the Oriental world have considered the drama as a major art form -- India and Japan. . . . the Chinese did not regard drama, either at its beginnings or since, as major art form." (The Preface to *The Genius of the Oriental Theater*, Edited by G. L. Anderson, The New American Library & The New English Library Limited, 1966, p. v.

[18] Strictly speaking, *yangbanxi* should be translated as Model Theatrical Works. Its repertoire consisted of five dramas, two ballets, one symphonic work based on the music of *Shajiabang* (*Jiaoxiang yinyue Shajiabang*) and the Piano Music with Peking Opera Arias *Red Lantern* (*Gangqin banchang Hongdeng-ji*).

well, yet, that has largely been because of a kind of nostalgia, reminiscing on a past youthful prime, a kind of ritual sacrifice to lost youth.[19]

Any attempt to fully analyse the reasons why drama was targeted during those times of cultural nihilism and forced into the service of fascist-style politics would constitute a topic of immense complexity, but for our present discussions it is worth pointing out the less obvious impact of even the traditional theatre in the past. Drama had always played an active role in history, in that it had its deeper roots in the collective national consciousness. So even when the authorities claimed to break with tradition, this consciousness still continued to function. Whether owing to the their own subconscious cognisance of this or to some conscious awareness, the authorities did make what was for them the tactically most promising choice. Drama had for several hundred years been a vital element of Chinese civilisation with cultural and political functions, and been popular with all walks of life, and precisely because of such pre-conditions it possessed a potential for being warmly welcomed nation-wide.[20]

Over the ten years of political disturbance and cultural turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese drama fell from its generally artistically determined orbit and travelled in a new, blatantly government-prescribed direction. The Model Drama, while accomplishing some theatrical experimentation,[21] lost much of the essence of dramatic tradition, was a theatre largely deprived of its national cultural heritage. For all that it

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[19] These theatrical works are occasionally performed nowadays and maitain their appeal to audiences, but to realise their power and impact would require the audience to place them back in their historical cultural and political setting, and there is a strong tendency to adapt in order to reduce the distance between the past and the present. For example, both the ballet version and opera version of *White Haired Girl* are being rehearsed by Shanghai Baleiwu-Tuan for the Hong Kong Arts Festival in October this year and for the Fouth International Women's Confrence (in Peking) respectively. The director, Yu Fu, has "weakened their colour of class struggle, and increased the emotional elements," and he holds that "the stuff of class struggle has lost its meaning nowadays, and reinforcing the love between the hero and heroine may meet the aesthetic demands of the new times." However, this adaptation was strongly objected to by He Jingzhi (the original playwright of the opera version), who even resorted to legal procedures to prevent the adaptations, so that both versions were forced to recover their original image. See Su Yuqin, "'Baimaonü' qinggan xi tai si fu-zhong", *Zhongyang ribao*, 10 Jun., 1995, p. 4.

[20] Colin Mackerras says: "It is interesting to find in the view of Chiang Ch'ing and her followers there are implicit two attitudes which they share with many of their opponents, and with earlier Chinese governments. One is the realization of the overwhelming power of tradition. . . . The other is the appreciation of the tight link between the theatre and society. I have noted several times that this relationship was particularly striking in the past, and it is not surprising to find that it still prevails in China." See "Government Policy towards the Theatre", in his *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times: From 1840 to the present day* (London; Thames & Hudson, 1975), p. 171.

[21] Colin Mackerras says for instance: "Despite its heavy propaganda content, *The Story of the Red Lantern* is exciting on the stage and in parts highly dramatic." *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p. 209. The Model Drama's artistic value is still acclaimed by some nowadays, even in Taiwan. Regarding *White Haired Girl*, for instance, Zhou Ye recently said, while criticising its excessive political elements: "From the artistic point of view, this play underwent constant refinement for dozens of years, and its artistic standards can by no means be denied." "'Jieji douzheng' yudu nanxiao?", *Zhongyang ribao*, 10 Jan, 1995, p. 4.

was short-lived, it had enduring deleterious after-effects. More than twenty years have passed since the havoc of that period ended, but the present condition of drama remains very disappointing, and its continued degeneration has worried and alarmed many people, making anxious as to its future fate. Various possible reasons have been mooted for the problem in an attempt to solve it, but what has largely been neglected is the undoubted fact that the present depressed condition has a lot to do the abnormal growth and distortions imposed upon the theatre during the Cultural Revolution. Once tradition is severed, it takes time to recover the linkage, and once the more spontaneous laws of history and art are violated, they impose their own penalty and demand compensation. Chinese drama nowadays rests in this dilemma. To proceed in the directions set by extreme left-wing politics no longer holds out any real promise, while it also seems difficult to escape from their repercussions and to return to the mainstreams of tradition.

The situation of drama is typical of those of other cultural and artistic categories, reflecting common problems which may, however, manifest themselves in other forms. It is undoubtedly of value at this point to take a yet closer look at the details of the question. Let us consider the claims on drama of political function as opposed to those of entertainment.

Although drama, as an artistic genre which potentially reflects social life in all its perspectives, may embody certain political functions, it is as a general rule dominated by the demands of aesthetics and entertainment effectively. Thus it is astonishing to realise the extreme extent to which the political ingredient was augmented during the Cultural Revolution.

There is a certain parallel with ancient Greek drama. Apart from its entertainment side, Greek drama was evidently religious and political, thus sharing something of a similar level of ideological outlook with the Chinese period under discussion. Like Greek myth which has had such an enduring influence on mankind's mentality, ancient Greek drama functioned as a synthetic ideological form containing various cultural embryos, such as the nascent politics, religion, ethics and philosophy of the region in their inchoate phase. Of the various kinds of Greek dramatic entertainment, customary, festive and mythological, the political, along with the ethical, was by no means inconsiderable. Complicated social problems, perplexing ethical issues, current political affairs, and so on, were broached in it, remedies prescribed and solutions provided. In *Oresteia*, ethical issues are interwoven with those of the social regime, and the problem is presented of choosing between patriarch and matriarch.[22] In *Antigone*, civil obedience clashes

[22] Cf.: "We are told that Aeschylus is a profound thinker about religious and political issues. It is possible to extract serious thought from the texture of his plays. We can think of the *Oresteia* as showing

violently with humanitarian benevolence and the customary codes of brother-and-sisterhood. In *Oedipus Rex*, the concept of fate and its justice are questioned,[23] and in the plays by Euripides, many weighty questions about, for example, slavery and women's social status, are advanced.[24] In Aristophanes' times, theatre became an ever more political forum, where the most important affairs of state, even war and peace, were debated.[25] This situation shows not only a close tie between drama and its social and cultural milieu, but also a relationship between them that has age-old features.

European drama in later ages sometimes played a role in politics, too, but never returned to the political preponderance of Greek theatre. The theatre was once even more or less completely suppressed in England for a time during the seventeenth century, a negative indication of how highly regarded the power of drama can be. In the same century, French dramaturgy underwent some strict censorship, and government-inspired authoritative disciplines were imposed on it. Similarly, during the Revolution of 1789, French theatrical activity was banned for some while. All of the above instances show that drama was often, although not always, regarded as having a strong ideological function. Sometimes indeed it has been viewed from purely ideological angles. Nonetheless, it never again became the synthetic ideological form containing all categories of information that it was in ancient Greece.

Although it may well be that the phenomena of Greek drama can never be repeated by history, somewhat similar phenomena occurred limitedly in a very different country and much later times. Stress on the political potential of drama has been advocated on many occasions through out history, but was never fully manifested until the abnormal and frantic times of the "ten years havoc" of the Cultural Revolution in this century from

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the development of a democratic society. We can read from it advice on how to vote for one political party." Leo Aylen, *Greek Tragedy and the Modern World* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1964), p. 37.

[23] Sophocles contributed very much to the artistic side of Greek tragedy and was not so obviously involved with the current politics as his predecessor and successor, so he rarely allowed himself a querulous note. All the same, "*Oidipous epi Kolonoi* (*Oedipus at Kolonos*) which he probably wrote in his ninetieth year and which was posthumously produced in 401, may be interpreted as having political references in scenes when the old King denounces Theban treachery, just as citizens of Athens may have done when the play was first produced." John Allen, "Sophokles", in his *A History of Theatre in Europe*, Heinemann Educational Books (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), p. 20.

[24] Cf.: "Patriotic support for the war is seen in the praise given Athens in *Medea* and *Heracleide*, and in the highly critical view of the Spartans in *Andromache*." B. Donald Brose & O. Franklin Kenworthy, *A Mirror to Life: A history of Western theatre* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1943), p. 25.

[25] "Each of his plays is the mouthpiece for a passionate idea, for which he battles with hot-blooded militancy. In Aristophane's work, passages of naked aggressiveness alternate with choral strophes of the highest lyrical beauty. Underlying his mordant irony and stinging scorn was an urgent concern with democracy." Margot Berthold, "Old Comedy", in her *A History of World Theatre* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972), p. 150.

1966 to 1976. This point vaguely occurred even to certain Western scholars at that time, and even ealier, for instance:

> The theatre of today is very different in character from the theatre of early Athens, from the Jacobean theatre of our country, from the theatre which exists **in China today**, because in other places and at other times the theatre has seen to have a more important social function than it has in this country today.[26]

It was truly peculiar abnormal times that pushed the politicisation of Chinese drama to the extreme. The Model Drama, while containing some elements considerable as purely in the sphere of entertainment, was an ideological weapon. That it was intended as such could not have been expressed more explicitly and blatantly by various official documents of that time, for instance:

> Comrade Chiang Ch'ing has the firmest class stand and the sharpest political acumen. She chose Peking opera, a stubborn fortress, as the breakthrough point in the general offensive against imperialism, feudalism and revisionism. With the staunchest militancy, she led the revolutionaries in a charge which righted Peking Opera's historical distortions, put Mao Tse-tung's thought in command on the stage and raised the curtain on the great proletarian cultural revolution.[27]

The conception of drama at that time was embodied mainly in five dramatic models, beside which there were three other models: two ballets and a symphonic work based on *Shajiabang* (as a whole, they were referred to as "Eight Model Theatrical Works", *Bage Yangbanxi*). Later there appeared a further four nationally distributed plays in succession: *Ode to the Dragon River* (*Longjiang song*), *Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*), *Azalea Mount* (*Dujun-shan*), *Rock Bay* (*Panshi-wan*) and *Battles on the Plateau* (*Pingyuan zuozhan*), which were never officially announced as models but were in practice likened to the models and governmentally valued almost to the same level. The five dramatic models became prevalent around 1968, and gained widespread currency through the channels of propaganda and artistic monopoly. First their prevalence was established all over the country, and soon this prevalence was turned into a movement with more of more vigorous political nature, under the slogan of "Sing the Model Drama and be revolutionaries", which lasted till the end of the Cultural Revolution. It was actually a very easy business to learn to sing the Model Dramas, since radio, television and all public media served their propagation to the utmost, while on the other hand they were the major and almost only output in the realm of artistic activity

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[26] My emboldenings; Clive Barker, *Theatre and Society*, in *Drama and the Theatre: With radio, film and television*, edited by John Russell Brown (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1971), p. 151.

[27] Yu Hui-jun (Yu Huiyong), "Let Our Theatre Propagate Mao Tse-tung's Thought For Ever", *Chinese Literature*, nos. 7-8, 1968, Peking: Foreign Language Press, p. 107.

and such a powerful atmosphere was created around them that people easily learnt them well in passing, no one able to resist assimilation.

In spite of the ease of with which they could be passively assimilated, it was still a serious and compulsory systematised political task to "popularise Model Drama". Such activities were organised by all working units at all levels, classes were often held on the plays and competition in their performance was very common. Apart from personal singing in solo form, collective singing (by a family, a class in the school or even a whole working unit) also frequently occurred. In cities, it would be incredible if anyone were not able to sing a few arias, unless that person was mentally handicapped. Amateur troupes were everywhere, a token of which was the massive sales of Peking Opera fiddles, of inferior quality, and the stage-prop shops were full of items exclusive to the Model Drama. It was common for people to able to sing all the arias, recite the whole texts and learn by heart the entire music of all the plays.

To increase the learning of the Model Drama, intensive studies of the texts were organised, fundamentally from a viewpoint of propaganda. People in general, soon becoming very familiar with the texts, well understood their political connotations and became skilled in the use of them for political ends. Quoting Model Drama grew to be almost as fashionable as quoting Mao's works was, the quotations functioning as political aphorisms, with an authority to them not much inferior to the so called "supreme instructions" -- Mao's selected sayings, and their application was amazingly universal, ranging from matters of state down to humble private affairs, from discussions of distant history right up to the concerns of current politics, and so on. Lines from Model Drama also found their way into other writings, sometimes serving just as a political or rhetorical ornament. Quoting the songs of Model Drama achieved a parity with the quoting of Mao's poems, and as in the case of that poetry was primarily a matter of politics rather than aesthetic pleasure.

Two parallels may be discerned in history to the situation of Model Drama. One, as we have seen, is the dramatic world of ancient Greece. Another is classical Chinese poetry of the Spring and Autumn (770-481) and Warring States (480-222) periods, when poems were quoted on political and diplomatic occasions as statements carrying ideological authority, the function of poetry in that time being summed up later as "to state one's (political, social and life) ideals" (*yanzhi*)[28], and Confucius declaring that, "by learning poetry well, a son might become filial to his father and a subject loyal to the state" (*Jin-er shi-fu, er-er shi-jun*)[29], and that, "Do not talk about anything without the

[28] Derived from *Mao Shi-xu*: "*Zai-xin wei-zhi, fayan weishi*".

[29] *Lunyu*, ch. 17/sect 9. Preceding this quotation he says: "Students, why don't you study poetry? Poetry can stimulate your ambitions, through it you can see society and politics, it helps you to unite

knowledge of poetry" (*Bu xue-shi, wu yi-yan*)[30], referring to the discussion of state and administrative matters.[31] It was more than two thousand years from that epoch to the Cultural Revolution, but the latter manifested likewise politicised phenomena, albeit in a different genre of literature. In this sense, although decidedly not in others, the dramatic products of the Cultural Revolution inherited from the Classical period of Chinese antiquity.[32]

Drama deposited its weighty sediments in general Chinese psychology. Exploring the reasons why Chinese drama came into being so late, some scholars point out that ancient Chinese society being itself so highly dramatic, in a variety of ways, there was no urgent need for the formal structures of full-blown dramatic entertainment. By "dramatic" in this context the scholars seem to mean "ritualistic", not using the adjective in the purely dramaturgical sense. In the Cultural Revolution period, however, a pervasive theatre-dramatic world was indeed created. Drama ruled people's thoughts and

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people around you, and with it you can also express your criticism" (*Shi keyi xing, keyi guan, keyi qun, keyi yuan*, and after this quotation he adds: "It also gives you wide knowledge of the names of natural beings" (*duo shi yu niao-shou-cao-mu zhi ming*).

[30] *Lunyu*, ch. 16 / sect. 13.

[31] Confucius also says: "A man who can recite three hundred pieces of poetry by heart, but who, when the conduct of the affairs of a nation is entrusted to him, can do nothing, and who when sent on a public mission to a foreign country, has nothing to say for himself, -- although such a man has much learning, of what use is it?" From this it is seen that the knowledge of poetry was a vital qualification for a statesman ansd was used as referring to high-level learning in general. (See ch. 13 / sect. 5.) Translation from Ku Hung Ming (Gu Hongming), *The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius* (Taipei: Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, 1982), p. 89.

Clearly, poetry, for Confucius, is an important measurement for personality. He says, for instance: "In education sentiment is called out by the study of poetry; judgement is formed by the study of the arts; and education of the character is completed by the study of music." (See ch. 8 / sect. 8, Ku's translation, op. cit., p. 49)

Ch. 11 / sect. 5 goes: "A disciple of Confucius was fond of repeating the verse: -- *A fleck on the stone may be ground away;/ A word misspoken will remain alway* [sic.]. Confucius married his niece to him."

Ch. 3 / sect. 8 relates the story: "A disciple of Confucius for the meaning of the following verse: *Her coquettish smiles,/ How dimpling they are;/ Her beautiful eyes,/ How beaming they are;/ O fairies [fairness?] is she,/ Who is simple and plain.*

"In painting," answered Confucius, "ornamentation and colour are matters of secondary importance compared with the groundwork."

"Then art itself," said the disciple: "is a matter of secondary consideration?"

"My friend," replied Confucius, "You have given me an idea. Now I can **talk of poetry** with you." (My emboldenings; Ku's translation, op. cit., pp. 12-3.)

Apart from the foregoing, *Lunyu* at times comments, recites and refers to *The Poetic Canon* (*Shijing*) in ch. 1 / sect. 15, ch. 2 / sect. 2, ch. 3 / sect. 20, ch. 7 / sect. 17, ch. 9 / sect.14, ch. 9 / sect. 30, ch. 9 / sect. 30, ch. 17 / sect. 10, ch. 17 / sect. 18, etc.

[32] Cf. David E. Pollard's remark: "Poetry, however, was not left to its own devices in the Spring and Warring States periods from which these works derive. It was customarily used as a means of communication, a kind of diplomatic code, among political advisers." See his *A Chinese Look at Literature: The literary values of Chou Tso-jen in relation to the tradition* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1973), p. 5.

governed their feelings. They were required to sing the plays, and, more significantly, to behave as the heroes of the plays. The illusory Model Drama stage world was misidentified with ordinary reality, icons in the play were worshipped as models for ordinary life, and the distorted depictions of interpersonal relationships were taken as a mirror of how people interrelated in reality[33]. The plots were full of revolutionary miracles which were in essence modern myths, but like the mythological elements in Greek drama, these miracles were also viewed as reflecting reality. It was common for people to find or claim to find solutions from the plays to problems of their actual lives, ranging from matters of political principle to private triviality. This was in effect a signal form of lunacy, since the dramas twisted the truths and logic of general reality.[34]

The period fostered a dramatic consciousness shared by all society throughout the nation. It affected people of all age groups. Some could think for themselves, maintained a sceptical attitude, and may have been aware of the absurdity of the situation and thus able to resist the indoctrination, but most people were willing to accept this monotone cultural category. Especially for children and young people, drama played a decisive role in the moulding of their temperament, personality, psychology, aesthetic judgement and cultural faculties. When the unified aura pervading drama died out with the end of its wider political setting, the attitudes and the influences derived from the Model Drama still lingered on among the general populace, and the repercussions of Model Drama indoctrinations are still widely felt. Some still adore it with an irreversible faith, some regard it as a nostalgic echo from their youth, some abhor it because of its serious conceptual or histrionic flaws, some are strongly allergic to it, as it reminds them of their suffering in the past, and some try to summon it into service to satisfy the demands of new times. Whatever the situation and people's attitudes to it, its far-reaching historical influence and still enduring significance are beyond all doubt.

The lingering impact of Model Drama is evident in the very decline and depressed state of Chinese traditional-style drama since the Cultural Revolution. The depression can be accounted for from many perspectives, such as the pluralisation of entertainments and so on, but there is much logic in trying to the present decline to the past prosperity. The present dramatic stands in sharp contrast to the past, being a negation of it. The Chinese theatrical world is falling into the paradox whereby drama lacks audience and audience is short of drama. It is a striking fact that drama has lost much of its audience to other artistic genres competing with it, and the other, associated fact is that in many ways new dramatic creations seem unable to rival their predecessor, the Model Drama.

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[33] Relationships among the characters were designed in perfect accordance with the theory of class struggle promoted by Mao Zedong.

[34] The collective militant psychology was largely due to the dramatic atmosphere.

When a playwright nowadays complains that people are not cultivated enough to appreciate drama, a drama fan (even a Model Drama lover) may, right or wrong, complain of the quality of the current dramatic creation.

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One angle from which we may consider this contemporary problem, and to seek to anticipate the future of the theatre, is that of the significance of love as a motif in Chinese drama. Love, the principal topic of this thesis, is no longer very topical in the academic field in China, while the topic of sexuality and sexual relationships in their cultural, social and anthropological implications seems to evoke much more interest. Love has long been a most popular theme, but nowadays is readily regarded as only suitable for sentimental, naive and facile works, whereas when the topic is sexual relationships instead it is felt to be more solid and forceful.

In terms of artistic creation, as opposed to public reactions, the situation is quite different. There is such a flood of plays employing it, in a way, however, that surely constitutes maltreatment or overuse. High lip-service is paid to it, the proliferation of its use has, in the view of some, devalued it, and this generalisation does indeed contain at least a partial truth.

Love is one of the most vital aspects of human life, so, in reflection of reality, literature and the arts often use it or include it as part of their themes. Generally speaking, it is not *per se* wrong for any work to employ love as its subject matter, with or without deliberation, since love is so life-prevalent and since love is an essential quality of human life. Nevertheless, it is not enough merely to include love, even comprehensively, what is important is to treat it properly and probe into its depths. It is in this respect that there are serious flaws in the love literature of contemporary China. In many works, love matter only serves as a flavour to attract the cultural market, functioning as trade mark not intrinsically pertinent to the thematic content, and its sensual associations drawing more attention than the philosophy in its treatment merits. Love, in its idealist definitions, is for love's sake only.[35]

In any case, although there is no general reason why love should be excluded from dramas, that does not means that it should necessarily be the major aspect and leading object of all dramatic or literary creation. Yet present trends are heading that direction. One major reason why love as an artistic motif cannot always be treated properly, is that

[35] In the autumn of 1980, Prof. Ma Qi (of The People's University) gave a lecture in Henan University on the romantic vogue in literature and the arts. Listing many titles of novels and films and so on which capitalised on the word "love", he mentioned an exception: *Not for Love* (film, *Bushi weile aiqing*), then added in humour: "It is *Still for Love!*" (meaning although it is entitled *Not for Love*, it is still for love's sake.)

not every author is good at handling this motif, owing to the variety of playwrights' natural temperament, social experience, philosophical comprehension, cultural cultivation, and so forth.

Not a few critics have been aware of this problem, as have many authors and readers as well. An author may well know his work is of no real quality yet still think the composition of a love-story, with the insertion of alluring erotic scenes, to be the quickest and cheapest way to satisfy the audience consumer-demands, and consider that in the absence of such elements the box office would be idle or his readership dwindle. The consumers, for their part, might equally be aware of the unsatisfactory quality of the works, yet lack any real choice but to accept the products supplied by the cultural market. Thus, somewhat ironically, there is a vicious circle, a paradox, whereby authors plead their innocence, claiming that they have to bring love into their works as a cost-effective way of making it sufficiently popular in style to match the appreciation capabilities of audience and readers, while, even more often, one hears complaints from audiences or readers of the author's poor creative ability.

It is difficult to apportion guilt in this situation, or to determine which side may be deemed hypocritical, since surely both cannot be totally right, and since on the whole both parties, authors and audience, undoubtedly have the potential to access the deeper connotations and finer essences of love, but their abilities to do so in practice are limited by actual circumstances, for which there is a historical background. In spite of the mutual recriminations, the real responsibility lies with history and cannot be laid at the door of any individual.

The main reason both for the feverish vogue of love themes and for the shortcomings of their application, is certainly linkable to the Cultural Revolution. Those ten years were a deep fault in the development of the Chinese comprehension of love as a theatrical and literary theme, which has overwhelmed both the present and the surviving traditions. The present is paying doubly for past errors; but for all its undoubted endeavours to recover the fine tradition of creativity in treating love themes, the gap seems difficult to close.

The Cultural Revolution saw many contrary developments. There was a cultivation of rigidity as opposed relaxation, sternness as opposed to tenderness, hatred as opposed to affection, asceticism as opposed to sex and pleasure, grandiosity without the sublime, the ridiculous without humour; and in short, a strong nurturing of all the qualities that militate against love in both its strictest and broadest definitions.

Love in the broad sense of humanitarian feeling towards others was distorted into the so-called "class friendship" and "class love", which were logically equivalent to the

hatred of, and ruthlessness and cruelty towards, "class enemies". This applied to both actual life and to the arts. Love in the more specific intersexual sense was simply and utterly forbidden, but of course only openly so in literature and the arts, since its total prohibition in real life would have been logistically more problem-fraught. Yet inevitably the literary and artistic prohibitions had their strong influence on real life in this respect as well.

It is informative to look at the ways in which the love motif was avoided. At various other periods hypocrisy can be perceived in cases where literature and the arts have lashed out at love and sex but where promiscuous indulgence has been tolerated by society. The charge of hypocrisy is less easy, however, to level at the Model Drama in its particular social and political setting.

The Model Drama and the other associated genres never attacked love or sex either directly or by insinuation, but rather by omission, since by banishing love from the stage because it rendered it in effect extinct and therefore out of the question. It is hard to credit, but this Drama contained nothing indicative of amorism, no love theme, no love motif, neither in the models nor in their successors.

It may be wondered then of what the relationships between the sexes consisted. In general, once opposite sexes are on the stage, romantic tendencies and natural inclinations arise. To rule out any possibility of such dangers, the Model Drama plays manipulated the relationships of the characters so as painstakingly to redefine their modes of communication out of the domain of love. First let us examine the five models.

In *Red Lantern* (*Hongdeng-ji*), there is natural, general love -- the love of blood ties not that of intra-sexual love. The plot takes place between three characters of different generations, Granny Li, her son Li Yuhe, and her granddaughter called Iron Plum-blossom (Tiemei). They each have a different genealogy. Granny Li's husband was the master to whom Li Yuhe (by his original name Zhang Yuhe) and Iron Plum-blossom's father, called Chen Zhixing, were bound apprentice. In the general railway strike which happened in the 1920s, all three men had taken an active part in the labour movement, and both the master and Chen had died for the revolution at the same time. Then the three, Granny, Zhang Yuhe and the girl (then a baby only), had come to be united as a new family, not one of flesh-and-blood. If Granny and Zhang have passed the age for physical love, the girl is just in her adolescence, but she is completely insulated from anything amorous, and nothing else in this play bears even a shadow of intra-sexual love. Obviously, the social importance of the human relationship takes precedence over natural or blood relationships, as the lines declare:

People say that family love outweighs all else,

But class love is greater yet, I know. [36]

These lines are a clumsy revision from an earlier text[37], and a good example of the political tenor which dominated the treatment of human relationships. *Red Lantern* is based on the film *Naturally There Will Be Successors* (*Ziyou houlai ren*) in terms of subject matter, but the ideological difference between the two is clarified by the following political critique:

> The concoctors of *Naturally There Will Be Successors* even made up arguments to justify such distortions. The "Director's Explanatory Notes" speaks of "a broad expression of human emotion", "a tone that is basically lyrical" and so on. . . . This is purely an expression of the bourgeois "theory of human nature", and its ugliness is sharply exposed when we compare it with these words of Li Yuhe's in *Red Lantern*. [38]

In *Sha Family Waterway* (*Shajia-bang*) there could quite naturally have been an amorous element. The play is set in south-eastern China at the time of Anti-Japanese War: a group of wounded soldiers of the New Fourth Route Army (led by Communists) is being chased by a native troop of semi-bandits who are accomplices of the Japanese, and to save and protect her comrades, a woman called Mrs Ah-Qing, who runs a teahouse for her cover, deals with the commander of the semi-bandit troop and gains his great confidence. In order to pre-empt any love involvements, this play most deliberately lays out the requisite character arrangement. Her husband never appears, he having been away for secret, revolutionary activities, so this Mrs Ah-Qing has only a nominal spouse, and in fact no slightest hint of love or marriage is allowed, apart from two brief statements to inform the audience of her marital status.

In *On the Docks* (*Haigang*), the heroine, the thirty-six-year-old Fang Sea-pearl (Haizhen) has neither lover nor husband, and there is no reference to her having any romantic life at all. Not only is this the case, but romantic relationships are made impossible for any character. The young worker Han Xiaoqiang, has been tempted by bourgeoisie ideas, seeks for the vanity of glory and is not satisfied with his job, which he should greatly value from Communist point of view. But, he never indulges in love or sex, those things most subject to attack in life and deemed typically bourgeois since they

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[36] As quoted in Ken Chien, "Critique of the Film 'Naturally There Will Be Successors'", *Chinese Literature*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, No. 7, 1973, p. 85.

[37] The aria in the earlier version, equivalent to that cited above, goes as follows:

You should know your Daddy is a poor man,
Hardly any money is left at home.
I have nothing but a red lantern with me wherever I am,
You must be sure to keep it with you wherever you are.

[38] Ibid., pp. 85-6.

destroyed the will to revolution. As mentioned before, the Model Drama's most effective way to counter love was not make love its target but to wholly eliminate it from people's consciousness.

Taking Tiger Mount by Strategy (*Zhiqu Weihu-shan*) is based on the novel *Sea of Forests and Land of Snow* (*Linhai xueyuan*, by Qu Bo). The novel has a clear thread of love between the commander of the detachment and the nurse, but in the play, although both the male and female are still included, their relationship is completely asexual.

Similarly in *Raiding the White Tiger Regiment* (*Qixi Baihu-tuan*) there is neither any hint of love nor a single sign of marriage or family.

So much for the Model Drama. As for the two Model Ballets, both are adaptations, *Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzi-jun*) from the film with the same title, *White Haired Girl* (*Baimao-nü*) from an opera and a film as well (both of which have the same title as the ballet). The film *Red Detachment of Women* was originally replete with militant air and has nothing to do with love as a delicate feeling, so the ballet naturally adheres to this asexual line. But the original story of *White Haired Girl* was very different, love leaving imprinting it with its a distinct mark. The hero and heroine were a couple deeply in love, and later the girl was carried off by the landlord, raped and made pregnant and subsequently gave birth. In the ballet, however, both the love thread and the other sexual details as mentioned above are discarded. Love is ruthlessly eliminated, and to prevent audience from drawing any love inferences through having been influenced by the opera or novel, the libretto stresses the relationship between Xi'er and Dachun as "class friendship". The rape scene is obliterated simply, or mainly, because of its sexual associations, which is extremely ironical, since by doing so the ballet mitigates the crime committed by one of the ideologically and socially deplorable landlord class. This contradiction shows how formidable love was to the authorities at that time. Yet more significantly, the ballet ruthlessly eliminates the lovers' affection, which had run through the earlier works as the basic framework of the whole plot.

Asexuality was ensured by tacit agreement between authors and censors, and governed all the later creations of the Model Drama style. *Azalea Mount* is about the bitter Civil War. *Rock Bay* is about the militia's activity in a coastal area. *Battle on the Plateau* sufficiently explains its theme by its title. Love was thus, according to the then current ideology, contrary to the militant spirit, and that provided an excuse to exclude love. The ballet *Daughter and Son of the Grassland* (*Caoyuan ernü*) is irrelevant to love, while the heroine in *Ode to Mount Yimeng* (*Yimeng song*) is married, but has seen her husband off at the very beginning of the work, and he never reappears, so that she was still a virgin in the eyes of censorship. Apart from her, no other character is in any

way involved with love or sex either. The same was true of the films in the middle of the 1970s, when a number of films began to appear one after the other. The first group consisted of *Red Times like Fire* (*Huohongde niandai*), *Green Pine-tree Ridge* (*Qingsong-ling*), and *Sunny Sky* (*Yanyang tian*), and then came such more radical ones as *Spring Bud* (*Chunmiao*), *Red Rain* (*Hongyu*), *Golden Highway* (*Jinguang dadao*), *Trail Blazing* (*Chuangye*), *Rupture* (*Juelie*) and *Counterattack* (*Fanji*). All these films advocated, as did the Model Drama, militant, aggressive, rigid and stern feeling which ran counter to tender emotion and warm affection.

As seen, in order to destroy any association with love, the Model Drama even tried to avoid family and marriage, so couples were generally not allowed. For those who have not lived through this period, this exclusion seems simply incredible. In the model works, the character either has no marital status, or has lost or been separated from his or her spouse. In *Red Lantern*, righteousness replaces inherent feeling, since the family is not one of blood linkage and marriage is viewed as superfluous. In *Sha Family Waterway*, the husband of Mrs. Ah-Qing has been dismissed from the stage even before the story takes place. In *Taking the Tiger Mount by Strategy*, the old hunter's wife has committed suicide as long as eight years before the beginning of the time-span of the plot. In the ballet *Ode to Mount Yimeng*, the image of the heroine's husband only flashes in at the very beginning of the prelude and vanishes while his is away on errand. The situation in *White Haired Girl* has already been discussed above.

If the character's spouse is neither dead nor sent away, that spouse could never allowed to show his or her face. *Ode to the River of Dragon* (*Longjiang-song*) is typical in this respect. The plot unfolds with an ideological dispute between Li Zhitian, the leader of a farm brigade, and Waterbloom (Shuiying), the female leader of the Communist Party branch, and it rings rather like the argument between a couple or a pare of lovers, as they are both young and well matched to each other in every way. To dismiss all such doubts and leave no room for romantic imagination, the play sets the scene as follows. After long, hot but friendly debate at Li's home in Act Two, Waterbloom asks him where his wife is, and the answer is given that she is attending a meeting. This mixing subtlety and awkwardness, it is all too obvious that this interjection is simply there in order to dismiss any potential misunderstanding of their relationship, and that his wife is only created incidentally, existing only in name and but for that second, and never being allowed onstage in flesh and blood.

The preceding was one way of nullifying the nuptial relationship and separating the married couple. The other way was to leave the marital status open and ambiguous. In *On the Docks*, the heroine Fang, leader of the Party branch, is for one thing thirty-six years old, and there is no clue as to whether she is married. The same circumstance is

applied to Waterbloom and to Ou Yingcai (in *Rock Bay*), and to most other protagonists. In some cases, even characters' age is left flexible and vague -- even though their age was indicated in the written *dramatis personae*, the trick being that the written list of characters was not accessible to everyone in those times, and not being essentially a part of the play either as literature or in performance, it had significance only for directing and rehearsal purposes, both of which are external to the written play and its performance alike. Characters' age and marital status need to be defined by the action and speech in actual performance rather than by a single authorial indication, and when such onstage definition is lacking, it is small wonder if the audience gains no sense of them. Indeed, though, the performance can actually augment ambiguity in this respect. For instance, an actor can be playing a role that in no way corresponds to his real-life age, and makeup does not necessarily lessen any such discrepancies. In the Model Dramas, such ambiguity was not regarded as a shortcoming, but was actively sought after.

The motif of love was taboo, and any implication whatsoever of it was forbidden. Lovers were lepers to be avoided at all costs. The discipline of avoidance was *de rigueur*, but tacitly imposed. People were clearly aware of its existence and power, and fully aware of the consequences of its violation.

A deeper probe may be essayed into why this voiding of love content was so significant. In the prior history of Chinese drama, love has been a very popular motif, often treated with great gusto and enthusiasm, with positive vitality and lusty energy. Indeed love dramas or dramas in which love played a lively part were in the majority. Humanitarian Chinese society provided a favourable climate for the dramatic expression of love as an important category of human activity, and even after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 and up to the 1960s, it never lost its position in literature and the arts, although sometimes it was placed in peril.[39] However, the unequalled extremisms of the Cultural Revolution created such an unprecedented ideological situation that love as a theatrical motif was totally ruled out, all historical momentum for the natural development of love motifs being halted by the forces of human power and inhumane authority. As discussed above, the most effective methods were employed,

[39] On the novels of mainland China before the Cultural Revolution, Rudolf G. Wagner says: "Love is a necessary ingredient of realist fiction with the exception of the all male cast in heavy-fighting war-novels or the purified atmosphere in the enemy's prisons where hatred consumes all earthly feelings", and, "There seems to be an irretrievable conflict, however, between the heroine's or hero's revolutionary commitment and his or her capacity to find fulfilment in love." See Rudolf G. Wagner, "Life as a Quote from a Foreign Book: Love, Pavel, and Rita", in *Das andere China: Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag, Herausgegeben von Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer.* Wolfenbütteler Forschungen: Herausgegeben von der Herzog August Bibliothek, Band 62 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag., 1995), p. 469.

those of avoiding love altogether, such an onslaught by omission being much more devastating than were love to be openly condemned or attacked. If love is openly attacked, it is still seen to exist, if only as an object of attack. But if it is never mentioned, it can easily be assumed that it has never existed or has been liquidated once and for all.

While it might easily at first glance be viewed as a matter of little consequence, of mere shades of distaste or an ephemeral vogue, or that it was at worst an approach of casual lunacy, in fact the complete banishing of love from the stage had deep and purposeful political motives and implications. Closer scrutiny shows beyond all doubt that this deliberate choice was totally suited to the aims of the authorities' politics at that time, and was an effective tool of those aims.

One major characteristic of love is its frequently ambivalent stance towards social structures and the operations of society. In apparent paradox, love, that supreme bringer-together, often impels lovers to hold themselves aloof from the ideologies and demands of social politics, or even to actively rebel against them. On the surface, love is the sphere of privacy and personal emotion, and therefore might be thought to merely be detached from the politics of the public and collective worlds, but exploring deeper one discerns that such detachment and individuality can of themselves constitute a challenge, even if only a passive one, to certain collectivist ideological tenets and that love in its profounder implications is very much bound up in logical fashion with social and political happenings and stances.

Love, whether it will or nay, may be obliged to interact with society and politics, and its milieu and indeed its very nature are inevitably modified and conditioned, or at the very least menaced, by certain types of society and political regime, so that when it quests for self-realisation or tries to grow out of old modes into the forms of its own choice, love may find itself in sharp contradiction to politics. In such circumstances, it can either submit and adapt, or resist, even withdraw into personal emotional life being a form of resistance.

There is, however, an important distinction to be made between love in real life and onstage love in this respect. In ordinary life, love, even when actively interacting or interfering in social life may do so in an unconscious way, whereas in literature and the arts it will do so through the author's conscious intentions. That is to say, in reality, when pairs in love violate the ethical code or offend the social hierarchy, they may not be aware of the social significance of their acts, being quite possible solely concerned to overcome all obstacles to their love and achieve a happy union, in other words being preoccupied with their personal happiness to the exclusion of everything else. The situation is totally different in artistic creation however. Authors and their works are more obliged to view the composite picture, and thus likely to be much more conscious

of the large social messages that can be conveyed by humble personal affairs, generally trying to reconcile the two on the lofty philosophical plane.

The age-old concept of love was in essence antagonistic to Chinese politics during those ten years. Love embodies goodwill, sympathy, reverence for others, and so on, and by those feelings contradicts the political theory of "class struggle" which teaches people to hate and fight and abuse each other. Love is universal. It takes place between a male individual and a female individual and may transcend such particularities as social status and political faction. It is this possibility that the domineering ideology tried its best to obviate. According to its tenets, no love could be allowed to overstep the category of class, no love was shared by mutually hostile classes, and, if love existed, it must be confined within a particular class. Beyond class only indifference and hatred were on offer. It should be pointed out that, although class struggle has undeniably happened in history, it should not be systematised, being alien to the rationalities of spontaneous human feelings, and has arisen in virulent form owing to the particular conditions of certain societies at certain times rather than being intrinsic to human nature eternal and universal. It was on this point that the hard line politics reversed the relationship between universality and particularity. The concept of love was given an extremely narrow definition, while hatred, struggle and fighting were interpreted as desirable and inevitable, and such notions as human nature, humanitarianism, philanthropism, fraternity, universal love and so on were simply criticised as deceptively abstract misconceptions.

Nowadays it seems clear to most that the concept of love and that of hard line Cultural Revolution-style politics are by nature irreconcilable. Apart from their essential contradiction to each other in specific theory, love stood in opposition to the general aesthetic aura of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution created a macho, militant, agitating, aggressive cultural atmosphere, logically antagonistic to love, which is aesthetically belongs to the realms of gentleness, softness and tranquillity. Such a Chinese love psychology is partly reflected in aspects of the Chinese language, in many idioms and set phrases of which love and sexuality are closely linked with such things as moon, breeze, flower, willow, butterfly, cloud, rain, and numerous other feminine or *yin* objects and concepts. This was a major reason why the motif could find no way onto the stage of Model Drama, on which harsh beauty, pretentious grandeur and artificial magnificence by choice prevailed. Dominating onstage and in the society was the grandiose scarlet as opposed to soft colours such as green or blue.[40] Such an aesthetic atmosphere was in perfect accord with the current politics. When the political creed of "class struggle" was being promoted and the "revolutionary militant will" being forged, it

[40] This fashionable colour was favoured by those times and replaced by its its opposite, green, when the times gave away to new ones.

effectively maintained and further intensified a spiritual and psychological tension in people, functioning in the case of drama effectively as an artistic therapy which complemented the political propaganda, by discouraging the audience from wallowing in thoughts of love and their will to revolution being sapped by love's gentler qualities. Politics at that time seemed to have every reason to reject love.

Although love was absent from the stage, it was impossible totally to banish its latency. Imagination has its own laws and impetus, and thoughts of it inevitably may often be kindled in spite of all the playwrights', producers' or performers' intentions.[41] The audience often paired the hero and heroine and explored the romantic potency between them, and even though the plays had deliberately stressed that the pair were not lovers, as for instance in *White Haired Girl*, still resisted so arbitrary a sentence on the characters' nuptial fate, and, impelled by the logic of life and reality, interpreted the characters' relationship in a romantic way. For another example, lots of people said with tongue in cheek that Mrs. Ah Qing and the Commander Hu must have had some illicit affairs. In such ways, the romantic undercurrent often came to the surface.

Love could be oppressed, but not destroyed, and although it was always formally absent from the stage during this period , its apparition always haunted there, amorphous and tantalising. As it sought its way out, the oppressed love consciousness could be partly transformed into physical adventurousness or other forms of excitement which were in accord with the extra-theatrical crazinesses of politics, while the untransformed remnant shut itself within itself. Yearnings for love gradually accumulated more and more solidly in people's deeper psyche, creating a mass that, when the appropriate season came, thawed and flooded forth, as happened a mere ten years or so after the onset of the Cultural Revolution. In this sense, the absence of love during that time was a negative incentive for its popularity today.

The consequences of the oppression have constituted a remarkable tendency towards the balancing out of the historical debt, a massive move towards restitution for the banishment of love. The lack of love in the Model Drama, which more or less replaced the other genres of literature and the arts for a while, served history ill, and recompense is being paid, some say with full interest.

In 1978, but two short years after the Cultural Revolution was terminated, a short story entitled *Position of Love* (*Aiqing-de weizhi*), by Liu Xinwu, signalled the new

[41] Christoph Harbsmeier says: "The repression [of erotica in pre-Buddhist Chinese culture], one is strongly tempted to speculate, must have helped to reinforce and enhance the vitality of private eroticism in China. Taboos make for excitement." *Das andere China: Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag, Herausgegeben von Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer*; Wolfenbütteler Forschungen: Herausgegeben von der Herzog August Bibliothek, Band 62 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), p. 348.

epoch of love motifs in literature and the arts. From this point on, interest in love surged massively for some years, welling into a veritable deluge. It became a vogue of enormous proportions to use love as one's creative subject matter, and works centred on love affairs achieved a broad market much more readily than those on other topics in general. Nor was the vogue at all ephemeral, having lasted into the present day. The surge was accelerated by translations of foreign literature and the introduction of Western theories on love and sex, such as those of Freud, which functioned as a catalytic promoter of the subjects. Now a widespread atmosphere favourable to amorosity thrives, making up to some extent at least for the emotional insipidity of the Cultural Revolution era.

The amorous cultural and aesthetic aura of nowadays is a distinct antithesis to those times. The writer and artist are left with considerable freedom to promote love themes, and indeed this new historical epoch demands that they do so. This reversed position and status of love in arts and society alike is a sign, as well as being a result, of the replacement of the old political regime and of changes in the general ideological structure. Love in fact never exists in total solitude, but always in interaction with its society and civilisation. At the same time as the previously pariah love motif is earning public favour, the whole cultural and aesthetic atmosphere in all its aspects is moving in the opposite direction to the trends of the Cultural Revolution.

This being so, the artistic mood has largely shifted from pretentious grandeur to a pensive mediation, from excitement to calmness, from delirium to sobriety. When the position of love was re-addressed by Liu Xinwu in his *Position of Love*, literature and the arts were seeking to expose the anti-humanitarian nature of the Cultural Revolution, to reveal the bodily scars in order that the wounds in the soul might be healed. This trend was signalled by another short story, *Wound* (*Shanghen*) by Lu Xinhua,[42] a female university student at the time. Literature dealing with like subject matter grew amazingly rapidly in volume, and before long formed a school that was epitomised terminologically as "the literature of wounds" (*shanghen wenxue*). And works of this school very often fabricated a sad story of unfulfilled love's leaving an invisible wound that could never be healed.[43] Thereafter, a tone of melancholy and sadness found a way into literature and the arts and soon permeated them. This change was also audibly reflected in music,

[42] In *Wenhui bao*, 11th Aug, 1978; and selected into Tang Dacheng (ed.), *Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi, 1976-1978, Duanpian-xiaoshuo-ji*, vol. 1 (Peking: Zhongguo Wenlian Chuban Gongsi, 1986).

[43] Early works of this kind include *What should I do? (Wo gai zenmo ban?)* by Chen Guodong, and *Illegitimate Mother (Ye Mama)* by Liu Shaotang). Wu Fengxing says: "There are quite a fews works of 'literature of wounds' reflecting the social perspectives, one of them being *The Position of Love* by Liu Xinwu." See Wu Fengxing, *Zhongguo dalu-de "shanghen wenxue"* (Taiwan: Youshi Wenhua-shiye Gongsi, 1981), p. 59. Although he incorrectly defines *The Position of Love* as "literature of wounds", the interaction between this and *Wound* is mentioned.

which might be referred to by the ancient term "the music of a ruined nation/ nation heading towards ruin (*wang-guo zhi-yin*)" used by Xunzi (Xun Kuang, c. 315 BC - c. 236 BC), showing as it does anxieties over the fate of the state and its people alike. In the visual arts, the dominance of grandeur and the stimulation of scarlet which prevailed in the ten years of the Cultural Revolution has been replaced by green, the soft, cool, soothing and tranquillising tint. This is particularly reflected in the fine arts, but also extensively in poetry. Harshness of depiction has largely died out along with the hard feelings which inspired it and which it inspired, and soft grace has come into its own, responding to the call of the times. In painting, the shallow formality of inevitable backgrounds of red banners and robust figures with ruddy cheeks and round faces, proclaiming the health and wealth that socialism fostered and the spiritual energy of revolutionaries, has been abandoned for a great variety of other artistic approaches, from which a much greater multiplicity of themes have been derived, such notably as those of the sickness, sorrow, grief, melancholy, misery and agony, which were considered "reactionary" and were anathema to coarse, hard tastes of the Cultural Revolution, which simplified and reduced human feelings into either cheer, for the "excellent contemporary situation", or hatred of "class enemies". The depiction of nudity, which can air natural beauty and reveal the sensual side of human nature, thus being not unconnected with love, has increasingly made its appearance in painting and sculpture. The recent cultural context being so favourable, love had rapidly gained ground in both arts and reality.

When we attempt to judge the Model Dramas, we should take account of what might be termed collective obligations and liabilities. The absence of love in Model Drama was a collective intention and collective error, in other words a mistake of Model Drama and its social and political background as a whole. That is to say, no individual work can be accurately assessed unless located within the entire system of Model Drama and put into the political and cultural context of that particular historical period. It may possibly be not artistically wrong for any particular play to avoid the love motif, although, given the all-pervasiveness of love in human life, the rigid exclusion of all mention of love might be considered unconvincing or inorganic. At least, a play without a dominant love theme can undoubtedly still be excellent entertainment. Even *Red Lantern* had a certain dramatic excitement to it in its times, though possibly because of the general dearth of other dramatic excitement. All the same, even plays which might be entertaining in themselves, will, if constituting the only diet, be guilty of contributing to monotony, each reinforcing the other's one-sidedness, and, worse still, those of that period in the 60s and 70s were part of a collective distortion that had grave nation-wide implications. The absence of love in Model Drama was not only a warping of human

reality, but, relatedly, a government-directed and collectivist error in the sphere of plot coherence and dramatic structure.

The romantic vogue which arose after the Cultural Revolution to fill its void has made love the prime topic of literature and the arts, but in doing so has put it in danger of being overused and carelessly treated, of its philosophical essence's being overwhelmed by sensuality and erotica. As in the case of Model Drama, this problem is also a collective one, and no individual author or critic should be made to shoulder the blame for it. That is to say that it is, at least to a large extent, because love, along with sexuality, was illogically subjected to collective oppression, that nowadays both love and erotic sensibility are increasingly favoured by the collective will. Contemporary literature has indeed come to be so much more involved with love and so much more openly sensual than it was even before the Cultural Revolution (in some but by no means all respects even including pre-Communist times) that some people have begun to worry about the prevalence and nature of love themes. Yet, aesthetically or morally right or wrong, such a vogue seems to involve, as well as subjective impulses and individual choices, deep objective reasons, which cannot be understood well unless the situation in the Cultural Revolution is taken as a historical reference. The difference is that the avoidance of love was clearly a result of the effort of the authority, while the prevalence of love is much more spontaneous, but nevertheless, both of them are logically subject to the hidden historical momentum of their times. The present situation cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the Cultural Revolution that preceded it.

Freedom in love may also involve slavery. When love was forbidden, people lost their freedom to love or openly enjoy the notion of love, and when people feel obliged to adopt love as a socially or economically obligatory subject, they are to some extent in a similar, although arguably much less onerous, position. Both producers and consumers have grown aware of the imbalance in recent China and begun to reflect soberly over the romantic fever, but it is still too early to predict how long it will last and what situation will replace it. The individual who complains of the pervasiveness of the mood of amorous culture may well lack the awareness of history, and simply feel bored with the monotony of the vogue, yet his underlying objections may be philosophical ones, rejecting merely the present approaches to love, and the terms of his complaints may in that case well signal the impending advent of an era of more thoughtful treatments of love, to oust the present overwhelmingly would-be spectacular Eros. Any such trend will surely not be a retreat to the ascetic or negating times, no restoration of the nightmare, but hopefully a growing demand that people treat love with more deferential deliberation, so as to deepen the general consciousness of love and heighten its sublimity.

The Cultural Revolution itself did not of course spring from nowhere. The authorities of the People's Republic of China had even before the Cultural Revolution advocated hypocritical prudery and blatant asceticism, to the great detriment of spontaneous progress and historical momentum in the building up of a modern Chinese organic culture of sexuality, and the Cultural Revolution pushed forward in the same direction, taking the tendencies to the ultimate limit. When trying to rebuild a thriving culture and faced with such cultural debris, people may naturally feel perplexed as to where to turn for the principles of reconstruction. It has not only been an internal reaction and reawakening, but the consciousness of love and sex has also been aroused by greater contacts with the love cultures of Western society and international community. At the same time, the heritage from traditional Chinese culture has unfortunately been overlooked or eschewed, with the result that the new developments have tended to lack a deeply developed cultural and ethical context. At present, the governmental and party preachings on morality have not really broken free from politicised asceticism, and are thus not acceptable to most people, while at the same time a considerable bulk of Western books dealing love and sexuality from various separate angles of philosophy, psychology, anthropology, cultural-studies and ethics, has been imported, which is not answering the fundamental problems either. In everyday life in modern China, the relative emancipation of the individual and the greater freedom granted to inherent human nature are mixed with what may be adjudged promiscuity and licentiousness, and the pursuit of spiritual freedom mingled with what could be called hedonistic excesses. This has partly been due to the misunderstanding and the incorrect evaluation of both Chinese tradition and Western reality, the former often generalised as "feudalism", "prudishness" and "asceticism", and the latter being mistaken for an ultimate freedom of sexuality which knows little restraint from moral conventions or the peculiarities of cultural conditioning. Such nullification of Chinese civilisation and such blind exoticism have in interaction created an unfavourable cultural context for love as sophisticated and profound artistic motif.

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A deeper understanding both of the Chinese past and of international comparisons is vital, and it is to this problem that my thesis addresses itself. In the light of the above discussions, the significance of studies on Chinese love plays, past and present, should be much clearer, given that the issue of love in drama was central to the Cultural Revolution, with all its ongoing world-wide implications, and it should also be evident that such studies will be more effective if conducted in a comparative way, taking foreign dramatic literature into consideration. Love is by no means a mere figment of fantasy,

although not easily realised in an ideal way. On the contrary, it, even as an ideal, has a solid existence and genuine effects, which often serve as indicators not only to the tendencies of the aesthetics of a particular time, but also to historical latencies underlying society in its deepest workings, as exemplified by the case of the Cultural Revolution and the period that followed it. When Eros joins with social impetus, romance operates in tandem with history, together informing the epic motions of history.

This is all motivation enowfor me to have chosen love in drama as my topic. One general misapprehension is that the topic is one that has already widely been dealt with in writings, and even one that has been over-discussed. Little could be further from the truth. While touched upon frequently, the element of love in drama has rarely indeed been probed to any depth or in any particular detail. What few pieces of research on love have made considerable achievements, have done so from a very different angle, and with a very different approach, to my own. At the same time, I make no claim whatsoever to encompass the whole vast and immensely intricate subject, merely seeking to carry the study of certain aspects of it forward in an individual manner and providing some fresh insights. The fullish picture will surely be the work of many, and of many generations. In the following chapters I take a preliminary look at a limited range of important categories of love-play, and by elucidating the power and complexity of their varied contributions, seek to reinforce recognition of the vital part that love drama has played and can play in human society.

CHAPTER II: Religious Love and Love versus Religion

In literature, conflicts between love and religion can, in most cases, be expressed as an antagonism between passion and asceticism, and are in essence a contradiction between opposing ethical forces. In these terms many works aim at setting forth the conflict between love as a spontaneous human desire, and religion representing divine authority or superhuman power. Most works of this kind that have been admired through the ages, in the West especially those from the Renaissance onwards, advocate free choice in love as an aspect of elevated, enlightened morality and condemn asceticism as a destructive force contrary to human nature. Against such a literary background, the unusual moral tone of each of the three plays chosen for discussion below stands out. Each is in favour of the oppression of emotion by divine authority and asceticism. They put a positive value on the victory of religion over secular desire, in sharp contrast to the usual praise of or admiration for love as representing the vital force of life and epitome of human nature at its finest.

Another feature of these plays is that they present a direct dramatic conflict between love and religion in general, rather than between a particular form of intra-sexual love and a particular religious variant. Such an antagonism is raised to the philosophical plane and its innate irreconcilability is strongly stressed. In these works, intra-sexual love is completely negated at the level of religious philosophy, it being considered that love and religion, as opposing entities, cannot coexist in the same ontological dimension.

This point is typically expressed by the English play *The Virgin-Martyr*, by Philip Massinger (1584-1640). In this work, the clash between love and asceticism parallels that between different religions -- paganism, as a cohesive religion, and Christianity, one of the most influential monotheisms. The contradiction between love and asceticism is analogous to that between opposing types of religion. Similarly, the pair of Chinese plays selected here, *Character for "Forbearance"* (*Ren-zi ji*) attributed to Zheng Tingyu (13th century AD) and *Crazy Ren (Ren Feng-zi)* attributed to Ma Zhiyuan (13th century AD), focus on "conversion" (*du*), and conversion in their case means, at least theoretically, to entirely abandon all kinds of worldly pleasure and fleshly desire, all that is signalled by love and sexuality.

I will argue that in these works, although the pro-religious attitude and ascetic outlook prevail and set their tone, anti-religious forces still manifest themselves with a certain tenacity. While emphasising divine power, these works also truly depict the

vitality of Eros, which is very often even more touching and convincing than the religious preaching. Because of this, these plays distinguish themselves from purely religious works such as the Medieval morality plays of Europe, and hold a singularly important place in studies of literature.

The dramatic conflict is thus couched in terms of mind versus body, spirit versus flesh, passion versus rationality, lust versus morality, liberty versus discipline, all of these oppositions being summed up by the fundamental opposition between worldly instinctive impulse and reflective religious asceticism. A clear line of demarcation runs between these two conflicting opposites, each of which represents a totally different philosophy of life. The works under discussion often oscillate across the line in certain respects, but, at least on the surface, they markedly favour the religious side. A major point shared in common by them is that they regard religion, in one form or another, as an emblem for civilised living, and, accordingly, relegate love to the level of primitive instinct.

One. Love versus Asceticism -- the Dramatic Conflict

*

In the two Chinese plays *Character for "Forbearance"* and *Crazy Ren* love is dismissed as mere *se*. This use of the word *se* is originally a Buddhist concept, the Sanskrit *rupa*, "outward appearance, form, colour, matter", referring to things physically visible, tangible or otherwise graspable by the senses, also defined as that which has resistance or which changes and disappears, with implications of the illusoriness and impermanence of ordinary mortal life (notions in part shared by Daoism), as opposed to enduring metaphysical truths and philosophical realities. Coinciding with other connotations of the term, *se* further means the sensually desirable, particularly women's sexual beauty, with the implication that love is a purely carnal matter of no spiritual value. *Se* is often linked to *kong* which means "empty", "insubstantial", "untrue" and "illusory", *kong* being a regular modifier of *se* and thus closely associated with it in the public mind. Such philosophical and linguistic attitudes would naturally relegate love to a very low status, but the depreciation of love was not confined to the semantic ambivalences of particular terms. In both Chinese plays the low opinion of love is further conveyed by both plot and didactic argument, in which love and sexuality are debased to the level of instinct and contrasted to a partly religious partly philosophical asceticism. *The Virgin-Martyr* holds a similar attitude to love, excluding it from the realm of Christian civilisation and consequently, in this play, love is excluded from civilisation as represented by Christianity, and correspondingly painting it as akin to the primitivity and moral savagery of paganism. For example, when Antoninus falls in love with Dorothea,

she just laughs at him, since, for her, love is a matter of absurdity and shame, and she never responds to his undying passion. She herself proves not only a martyr, but, more importantly, a virgin to the end.[1] Thus love is rejected and negated both on principle and by its inherent nature.

The themes and structures of these plays affect the fundamental religious versus secular argument similarly in each play. *Crazy Ren* and *Character for "Forbearance"* both start with the immortals' intention of converting the protagonist, and end with the success of the conversion. During the development of the tale, the hero is tested repeatedly, hesitates and vacillates, but is eventually tempered, purified and taken up into the immortal realm. In both works, the conflict is a fierce one between secular life and religious life, ordinary mortal life subordinated to the deplorably physical and the temporary and illusory, whereas identification with religion wins the main character divine blessing and transports him to the realm of absolute truth and life eternal.

The design of the plot and the composition of the dramatic structure of both plays have as their first concern to clarify their religious stance towards mundane life. Both pieces start with an immortal's entering and addressing the audience from an immortal realm. In the prologue of *Character for "Forbearance"*, the Buddhist arhat Ananda first introduces himself, then immediately proceeds to relate the protagonist's personal history prior to the plot. The major character Liu Junzuo was the Thirteenth Arhat in the immortal world, but on one occasion, through a surge of yearning for mortal things, became absent-minded during Ananda's preaching, and for that offence should have been banished to the town in the afterlife called Fengdu for torture. Buddha, however, has been so merciful as to let him instead be reincarnated as a human being in a family Liu, under the name Liu Junzuo. For fear Junzuo go astray, he has further sent the bodhisattva Maitreya down to the world in order to give Junzuo a spiritual revelation and thereafter to guide him back to heaven. Immediately after this introduction, Junzuo comes on stage. He has now been married for many years and fathered two children, and his account of his mortal life is, by its materiality, in stark contrast to the ideals that have just been set forth by Ananda:

> (Enter Liu Junzuo with his wife and children.)

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[1] Cf. the following: "The idea of celibacy was based on the example of Jesus and Paul, the role of the priesthood in some Greek sects, the reaction to the loose life in Rome, and the Biblical belief that the world was coming to an end and that only virgins would ascend to heaven." See Bernard I. Murstein, "Early Christian Views on Marriage and Sex", in his *Love, Sex, and Marriage through the Ages* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), p. 91.

> LIU JUNZUO. I am a native of Kaifeng, by the name of Liu Junzuo. There are four of us in my family. My wife is from the Wang family, and aged forty. We have a son and daughter. The boy's name is Buddha-cherished [Foliu] and the girl's Samgha-bondmaid [Sengnu]. I am the richest man in the town, but although I have quite a bit of savings, I never have the heart to spend a penny of it. . . .[2]

The two realms, of the mortal and the immortal worlds are opposed, and at the start of the play the audience would mentally locate itself on the plane of the immortal realm from which Ananda is speaking, tending to adopt his religious and moral standpoint but when the scene changes to Junzuo's life down in the world below, the audience does not automatically descend there, but instead continues to remain at the level of the immortals, looking down at the human world. While his previous divine existence was in accord with the eternal truths of existence, Junzuo only denies and detracts from such truths. That the hero was an arhat, is staying in the mundane world only as a brief transition and will soon be recalled to heaven, emphasises the illusoriness and absurdity of humans' mortal life.

The prologue of *Crazy Ren* presents a very similar situation. It declares that human life is predestined and that human beings are the playthings of supernatural power, thus likewise pointing out the worthlessness of mortal life. This play has the same thematic intention and its formative organisation is also similar to that of *Character for "Forbearance"*. A Daoist immortal called Ma comes onstage, introduces himself and relates the background of the plot:

> (Enter Ma Congyi).
>
> MA CONGYI. . . . I am Ma, by the given name of Congyi, a native of Laiyang and a descendant of General Ma Yuan. I used to possess a great sum of money and lots of land and houses. We had had secret magic powers for many generations, and my forefathers had all that time been dispensing benevolence. To begin with, I received lessons from the Top Master, the Daoist Founder, but did not achieve the true essence, so my soul was sent to theNetherworld, and suffered whipping there. Unexpectedly, one day the Master came to rescue me in the disguise of an angel. He caused me to be half dreaming and half awake, then I began to fear life and death, which is why I later abandoned my fortune and left my wife and family, . . .
>
> Last night I saw a gust of blue air pushing up into the sky and shining over Sweet-river Town at the foot of MountCentral-South. In this town lives a butcher called Ren who is semi-immortal. So I have reported the matter to the Master and have come to convert him to immortality.[3]

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[2] P. 1059. Quotations of this play are my translations from *Ren-zi ji*, in *Yuanqu xuan*, compiled by Zan Jinshu, 4 vols. (Peking: Zhonghua Shuju, 1958), vol. 3.

[3] P. 1670. Quotations of this play are my translations from *Ren Feng-zi*, in *Yuanqu Xuan*, op. cit., vol. 4.

At this point Ren enters, in his human state, and the plot is further unfolded. Like *Character for "Forbearance"*, the starting point is set in the immortal realm, in an atmosphere of myth and religion. As the plot takes us down to the human world, the direction of development and the destination of the protagonist are implied, and they later turning out to have been totally due to predetermination by the supernatural power, and the human characters to have been simply puppets whose fortune is manipulated by the divine. The fundamentally religious foundation of the play is thus established.

Conflicts between love and religion are then seen to arise.

In *Character for "Forbearance"*, when the relationship between mortal life and religious life is demonstrated, it explains the position of love in mortal life. According to the play, mortal life consists mainly of the pursuit of material wealth and physical pleasure, the latter of which is epitomised by love and sexuality. Of the quest for material wealth and the quest for sexual pleasure, the latter is shown as playing a more vital role than the former, so that on some occasions it functions as a symbol for the whole content of acquisitive human life, and is the principal target of the religious asceticism. This has the opposite effect that the more love is decried, the more its crucial position in human life is confirmed.

That the dramatic conflict between lay life and the religious quest has been simplified into one between love and abstinence from sexual desire is made quite obvious. In *Character for "Forbearance"*, such conflict is intensified twice, once in Act Two and once in Act Three. In the first conflict, the hero, who has now been converted, is leading a reclusive life. He has discarded all worldly desires, only enjoying religious tranquillity and spiritual blessing.

LIU JUNZUO. (Sings)
Hardly have the swallows and orioles flown over the flowery stream,
Than the geese and ducks are seen in the lotus pond.
It is no longer the season of chrysanthemum
when the wild geese fly over from the fortresses,
Now the winter crows are crowing on the hills of plum blossom.
I am thinking of the beautiful four seasons,
I am counting how many springs have gone and summers arrived.
I have terminated all desires of fame and wealth,
I have broken with the golden locks and jade cangue,
I have tethered all my ambition and expectation firmly.

. . .

I am now a monk in thatch hut,
Free from care and worry,

If ever I fly into mundane rage,
I can check it with a bridle.
Thumbing the beads,
I am not concerned with anything.
Sitting silent,
I sigh at the falling flowers,
Walking alone,
I am accompanied by the misty glow.[4]

But before long, his resolution and achievement prove to be a failure. He is informed that an affair is taking place between his wife and Junyou, his sworn brother, and then all such mundane feelings as jealousy and hatred come back to him. He recalls how he once saved Junyou's life and how well he treated him, and quits his secluded thatch hut for home. Seeing Junyou and his wife drinking together, he falls back into the ways of the mundane world and attempts to kill Junyou. We know that his present jealousy, hatred and cruelty are due to his lingering affection and the remnant of lust for his beloved and, and so can interpret the nature of this conflict and the significance of its violence with deeper assurance.

It turns out that this romantic episode has deliberately been arranged by Maitreya, solely as a test. That this is but an exercise in itself stresses that love and sex are only an illusion, just as wealth is but mere vanity. The scene corresponds with the prologue, and begins to reveal a hidden thread of plot which draws together the actions of the immortals. In fact, this hidden plot dominates precisely because its progress is, vitally, engineered and maintained by the supernatural power. This might be considered an artistic technique associated with the dramatic structure, but it also contributes much to the theme that love is no other than a game designed by the supernatural, and that the mortal world is an illusory sphere and human life a transitional phase, lacking both durability and credibility. This argument is further supported by the next conflict. Although he is brought up sharply and reminded by the written Chinese character *ren* for "forbearance", "abstinence", which miraculously appears on the palm of his hand, and although he forces himself back to the virtues of Buddhism, his sexual complexes still smoulder beneath the surface and shortly bring about more violent clashes, which push the plot to its climax in Act Three, carrying over into Act Four. This time the intensely ferocious conflict that takes place is more obviously between love and abstinence. Some further analyses (of Act Three) are pertinent here.

Act Three has more ideas and analysis than any of the other acts. The first part of it consists of a great deal of religious and philosophical dialogue on life and the world, and

[4] *Ren-zi ji*, op. cit., p. 1068.

later the dialogue comes to the issue of love and abstinence. For example, the abbot of the monastery instructs Junzuo:

> My Master told you to abide by Buddhism. You should see the wisdom that is tranquillity. This is fundamental. Don't be confused! Tranquillity is the form of wisdom. Wisdom is the content of tranquillity. Where there is wisdom, there is tranquillity. Where there is tranquillity, there is wisdom. If you understand such words, you have gained both wisdom and tranquillity. In seeking to learn the Way, it is not right to say that wisdom comes before tranquillity. Tranquillity is to wisdom as a lamp is to light. Where there is a lamp, there is the light. Where there is no lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is a form for light, while light is the content of the lamp. Although they are termed differently, form and content are identical. That is all, tranquillity and wisdom. Pray, pray! Forbearance, abstinence!"[5]

At this moment, Junzuo unexpectedly recovers his mortal tendencies and declares that he could not tolerate the ascetic life of a monk or the suffering of life without sex. Then another illusion is conjured up by the god. Junzuo's wife comes to him and they express affection for each other, but are separated by the abbot. Then a fat monk comes along with two women. Junzuo, surprised at this blatant lack of celibacy, asks the abbot about them, and is told that the women are both wives of the fat monk. Hearing this, Junzuo feels cheated by religion, so leaves for home to retrieve his lay life. In the final act, on his way home he meets an old man, and it turns out that this man, considerably senior to him in age, is in fact his grandson, since, although so many years have passed in the human world, Junzuo has remained young. As he no longer has any place in the mortal world, he asks the fat monk to once again take him away from it. At this juncture, the fat monk, Maitreya himself, discloses Junzuo's previous immortal identity, and he understands that all the romantic vicissitudes that have just been happening have been but mere illusions.

Although *Crazy Ren* assumes a Daoist form, the religious sense of it is essentially the same as the Buddhist ideas of *Character for "Forbearance"*. It is shown in this play that human life is illusory, and that human beings are not sufficient unto themselves, but are subject to the divine predestination, their sorrows and joys constituting only a briefest instant-long part of the temporal stream. Life is regarded as not solidly true and the reality of death also as questionable, and the distinction between life and death is considered vague. This idea is given dramatic shape in Act One when Crazy Ren, about to murder Ma Congyi, is killed by a genie. This produces a striking absurdity as far as ordinary realities are concerned. Ren has been killed but is still alive. His head is supposed to have been chopped off, but he still demands his head:

> (Enter a genie with a sword in his hand. He catches Ren. . . .)

[5] Ibid., p. 1073.

(Genie kills Ren.)
CRAZY REN. Murder! murder!
REN. Alas! I have been murdered! Give me my head back!
MA CONGYI. You wanted to kill me just now. Why ask me for your head! Now, you feel for your head yourself![6]

In this dramatic and ideological context, life and death being both elusory and illusory, and hardly distinguishable, what is absolutely and eternally true stands outside, beyond worldly concepts. Such a tenor is revealed by the following scene, as Ren realises he is still alive even after he has been killed :

CRAZY REN. Master! please let me go home!
MA CONGYI. Do as you please. Who on Earth is stopping you?
CRAZY REN. Master, when I came here there was only one road, but now there are three. I wonder which one is the way out?
MA CONGYI. You came from where you came from. You go where you will go. Don't stray from your right path!
CRAZY REN. Oh, yes, yes. (Meditating.) That I came from where I came from refers to my birth. That I go where I will go refers to my death. He told me not to lose the right path: does he mean that I should leave the world for religion?[7]

So the only way to transcend the paradox and perplexity of life and death is held to be conversion. Life and death concern the mundane world only. Beyond them is "the highway leading to enduring life (eternity)", as Ma congyi says.

When Ren shows that he is willing to be converted, he is bidden to follow the Ten Abstentions of Buddhism. Although those include abstention from love, sex, wealth, alcohol, anger, hatred, malevolence and so on, the conflict of the play still centres on love only. In a way similar to *Character for "Forbearance"*, love, in various ways, stands as a symbol for the whole content of human life. As in that other play, the clash between life and religion is boiled down to a conflict between sexual love and asceticism, thus once again fully reaffirming the vital position of love. The dominant traditional Chinese view of life lays emphasis on family happiness (*tianlun zhi le*, literally meaning "the consanguineous pleasure as a blessing from Heaven"), which happiness is largely based on blood bonds and inherent affection. From a Buddhist point of view, the involvement with family typifies mundane feelings. It is the first thing that must be discarded, but is, however, it is the most difficult to abandon. The Chinese word *chujia* for "entering the religious life" literally means "abandoning family" or "going out of the

[6] *Ren Feng-zi*, op. cit., p. 1674.
[7] Ibid., pp. 1674-5.

family".[8] Thus, in both plays, the protagonists meet with the hardship of making their farewells to their offspring. The family as a unit of social organisation is based on marriage, while as an affectionate unity it derives its cohesion from love and through sexuality, and so stands in obvious association with love and sex.[9] From this point of view, we may readily comprehend how the abandonment of domestic life and family happiness parallels asceticism in the latter's concern with love and sex.[10]

In *Crazy Ren*, the conflict between love and abstinence from sex is equally acute. Ren's wife finds him in the secluded garden where he lives as a hermit, and tries to waken his romantic feelings and persuade him to return to secular life, but is harshly rejected. At last, he writes her a divorce paper and kills his child, to demonstrate that he has completely disengaged himself from mundane life. By this time all his tender feelings for his family and his fierce desire for sex have been totally replaced by religious zeal. Thematically, this is a conflict between opposite life principles and contrary moral forces. The conflict is at its highpoint when Ren and his wife meet each other in the reclusive garden. On his wife's demands that he return to lay life, he gives full expression to the ascetic view, as the following shows:

> CRAZY REN. (Sings)
> *I cultivate my virtue every day in this garden,*
> *And have arranged my permanent plan.*
> *Fortunately I have penetrated life*
> *and acquired the key to metaphysics,*

---

[8] Family is also belittled in Christianity. For this B. I. Murstein provides an example concerning Jesus: "His attitude toward the family might be described as indifferent. The New Testament is replete with his statements in praise of the Father (God), but not of his nominal father, Joseph. . . . Clearly Jesus had a mission, and earthly entanglements relating to families could only interfere with God's work." "Jesus and the Dawn of Christianity", in his *Love, Sex, and Marriage through the Ages* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), p. 87. The de-emphasis of family is due to its connection with marriage and further with sexuality and love, and this is clearly reflected in Chinese linguistic respects: the word *jia*, "family" refers, directly rather than metaphorically, to marriage, as in *chengjia*, "(of a man) to get married", and the word *shi*, "home" to wife, as in *qishi*, "wife", etc.

[9] As for the position of family in Chinese secular life, W. J. F. Jenner says: "The centrality of families in Chinese cultures is one of the things that are often taken less seriously than they should be simply because they are so obvious. There are, after all, enough of them, and the patrilineal family has been one of the things that have defined Chinese cultures over the last 4,000 to 5,000 years." "Family Circle", in his *The Tyranny of History* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 103.

[10] Cf. Lawrence Stone: "At the biological level, family and marriage provide for the reproduction and nurture of legitimate children. **The second function is to canalized and control the drive for sexual play and pleasure, which is so extraordinarily constant in the human species, persisting all the year round and to a more advanced age than is needed for reproductive purposes.** The emotional function -- which is by no means always present -- is to form an attachment arising out of close and regular physical proximity to another human being, whether the relationship be husband or wife or parent to child." Emboldenings mine; see L. Stone, "Problem, Method and Definition", in his *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 21-2.

Otherwise I would have mis-spent my whole life
In the arena of vanity,
In the ocean of vicissitudes.
What I have is plain meals with yellow leeks,
Although plain, it has taste.
I boil young tea leaves in a stone tripod,
I pour cleaning water into a terracotta jar.
On hearing the cock crowing the dawn,
I get up once again.
I have seen through
the time lapsing in the flicker of an eyelid,
the life as hasty as the waving of your hand,
the superfluous world as brief as the turning of your head.[11]

The clash then shifts from general principles and condenses itself in the matter of love, as his wife tries to persuade him to return to mundane life:

CRAZY REN.
Everyday I get water from the well by winding the windlass
Till the crowd of stars becomes sparse.
I love to stay up late in the moonlit night,
I love to toil through all seasons.
WIFE. Don't give yourself cause for regrets!
CRAZY REN.
How should I regret,
As I am no longer implicated with anyone.
WIFE. You should be thankful that it's me that's your wife. If it were anybody else, what would have happened?. . . Butcher Ren! you followed that monk for the sake of religion, and left your delicate wife and immature child and all your domestic affairs behind, but what hope have you of ever turning immortal? Today I must drag you home, whether you want to go or not.
CRAZY REN. What a rude woman! I will beat you unless you go home right now![12]

Then he beats her, a beating which symbolises that love itself has been beaten:

WIFE. . . .
It is said it is wise to be lenient,
You and I are affectionate by nature.
Come home with me, Ren!
CRAZY REN.
Since I have lived here
under the forest and in the valley,
Never can you expect me to go back there
before the stars and under the moon.

[11] *Ren Feng-zi*, p. 1677.
[12] Ibid..

WIFE. Don't you know the proverb that "Wife follows the tune of her husband, and wife's glory depends on her husband's fame"?! . . . If you don't come with me, I will die here."[13]

At this point, he wants some stationery in order to write a divorce paper, and in the dramatic tension of this incident, his arias accentuate the ascetic tenets against love:

CRAZY REN.

I have jumped out of the crowd of tigers and wolves,
I have taken my farewell of the meetings of love birds;

What a pity I don't have any paper!

WIFE. I have a handkerchief. Here you are.

CRAZY REN.

. . .
No stationery is available in my garden,
So I lay the handkerchief on the field,
And put my hand in the black ditch mud;
I place my fingerprint, with mud for ink,
Now our love and affection have been cut off, terminated.
Flowers are broken and the moon wanes,
Who still longs for the love bed?- Not me!

WIFE. (Grabs him.) Ren, how heartless you are!

CRAZY REN. Take it easy, and listen!

Human life is confined to the space between heaven and earth,
How few people can live to the age of seventy?
Life changes like the flowers,
People worry about age and
Blossoms fear spring's going home.
Poor or rich,
Human beings have a fixed length of life,
Bloom, fade,
How many days can flowers enjoy?
. . .
Firstly I no longer indulge in eros and amour,
Secondly I am no longer fond of the bottle.
What can be achieved by piling up gold and heaping up jade?
Who can resist the temptation of those three?
Having jumped out of the Red Dust world,
I am voyaging far among the celestial waves,
When the axe is rotting over the immortals' chess.[14]
I will be in company with the heavenly crane
Coming and going:
Don't think I still long for your fragrant cheeks
Lingering closely on mine, this side and that?

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[13] Ibid., p. 1677-8.

[14] *Xia lan fuke xianqi*. The legend has it that a woodsman watched two elderly men playing chess. When the game was over, he found the handle of his axe had rotted. It turned out that the chess players were immortals, a minute of immortal time equalling years of the mortal one.

. . .

You and I have parted the intertwined branches of love,
What you love is harmonious married-life for a hundred years,
What I fear is the transmigration of the Six Status of Rebirth.[15]

WIFE. Ren, how heartless you are!

CRAZY REN. Just you go home!

I will only see --
The moon rising hastily from the east,
The sun falling gradually in the west,
And autumnal wild geese and spring swallows
Following and chasing each other speedily.

YOUNG MAN. Look, brother, your wife is like a flower, why don't you come along with her!

CRAZY REN.

You are now you, my wife beautiful as a nymph!
Who will be who, when this charming child grows up?[16]

(Ren throws his child onto the ground to its death.)

WIFE. Ren, why did you kill our child?!

CRAZY REN.

I see her shedding tears with no break.
I don't value his bubble-like life,
I don't care for her flower-like face.[17]

*

In these two religious plays, sexual love is relegated to the opposite of such qualities as spirituality, wisdom and intelligence, being viewed as a mere physical pleasure, the emotional agitation involved in which is in essence the foe of tranquillity, that divine blessing, so that in this sense neither love nor sex is to be regarded as truly pleasant, both being a false facade, deceptive and alluring. Thus only asceticism leads to the blessings of happiness. The importance of love in life is reliably identified in these works, even though the attitude to it may be mistaken. In reality, in its ideal expression, sexual love is more convincingly defined as a combination of physical enjoyment and emotional happiness, occupying a position between material fortune and spiritual bliss, being neither entirely the one nor entirely the other. In these plays, both of these latter are shown as irreconcilable with spiritual happiness. Despite its ascetic elements, this religious idea is, in a certain sense, also a philosophical reflection on life, there are many mundane implications to it. For example, in the ancient Confucian classic *Book of Rites* (*Li ji*) *it says*: "Eating and drinking and sexual relations between man and woman are the

[15] *Liu dao lunhui.*

[16] "Who will be who" is *Shei shi shei* in the original. This line means that when the child grows up, the father would not be able to identify with them and keep the relationship between them, because everything is changeable, particularly human beings' hearts. I here try to preserve the beauty of symmetry and ambiguity of the Chinese original.

[17] *Ren Feng-zi*, p. 1679.

primary desires of human beings" (*Yinshi nannü, ren zhi dayu yan*), and, whereas Marx defined human relationships in terms of economy, Freud attributed them to sexual psychology, each of them chiming with one aspect of the viewpoint in these plays. When the plays use love as a symbol for hedonistic pleasure, it is the prime cause of suffering, misfortune and havoc, thus nought but a sin which should be resolutely abstained from. This partly resonates with the Freudian idea that the libido, besides being the hidden driving force for human activities, social and cultural and artistic, stimulating creation and leading to sublimations, also fosters destructive forces.[18] Both plays view sexual desire as the cause of interpersonal conflict (*renwo shifei*), and we recall that Zhu Yuanzhang, the Ming founding emperor and former Buddhist monk (1328-1398), compared the freeing of oneself from mundane desires to the castrating of pigs: "Both hands split apart the path of life and death, as one knife cuts off the root of moralistic rights and wrongs (*Shuangshou pikai shengsi lu, yidao geduan shifei gen*)"![19]

The resolution of the conflict is similar in the two plays' denouements. The religious view is strengthened by the outcome of their plots, in which the heroes are completely converted and all their mortal desires overcome.

Before reaching such a conclusion, the final act in each play continues to reveal the truth of the religious life and the falsity of the worldly. When the hero once again falls into the conflict between worldly aspiration and religious belief, the immortal descends and declares that all the troubles that the hero has suffered up to now were designed by him to prove the hero. This echoes the prologue in which the deity is the first to come onstage and express his intention of converting the hero. In terms of technique, the plot thus forms a circle and the structure is made complete, giving the audience a feeling of

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[18] He says, for instance: "The very incapacity of the sexual instinct to yield complete satisfaction as soon as it submits to the first demands of civilization becomes the source, however, of the noblest cultural achievements which are brought into being by ever more extensive sublimation of its instinctual components. . . . It seems, therefore, that the irreconcilable difference between the demands of the two instincts -- the sexual and the egoistic -- has made men capable of ever higher achievements, though subject, it is true, to a constant danger, to which, in the form of neurosis, the weaker are succumbing today." Sigmund Freud, "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 190. See also ibid., pp. 28, 36, 53-4, 78, 80-1, 97, 122-3, 132-6.

As for the destructive force, Freud thinks "a certain mixture of these two trends [Sadism and Masochism] is included in normal sexual relations," which are "two excellent examples of a mixture of the two classes of instinct, of Eros and aggressiveness", (p. 568) and: "it [Masochism] affords us a guarantee of the existence of a trend that has self-destruction as its aim", while Sadism is "the destructive instinct directed outwards, thus acquiring the characteristic of aggressiveness." (P. 569.) See "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis 1933", in James Strachey (ed. & tran.), *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971).

[19] Cf. Li Zuoxian and Jin Daoren, *Zhongguo lidai duilian gushi xuan* (Peking: Gongren Chubanshe, 1985), p. 72.

perfectedness. The contribution to the theme, however, is yet more important: what is predestined is fulfilled and the power of religion further demonstrated.

The thesis that human life is an illusion is strongly reiterated by the conclusions and the absurdity of mundane human life thematically and structurally exposed. In *Character for "Forbearance"*, Junzuo comes across his grandson, who is much older than him because of the differences between mortal and immortal time, a second of immortal time equalling months or years of human life. This means that he has lost his niche in the human world, become dislocated, so that the only solution to his dilemma is a return to religious truths. Similarly in *Crazy Ren*, the child who has been killed by Ren, his father, comes back, as a live person rather than a ghost, to avenge himself on Ren and demand his head back. This absurdity echoes the scene in which Ren asked for his head back after having been killed and had his head chopped off. These scenes seek to show that life is simply a joke, a dream, something illogical, illusory and instantaneous, being only a transitional period of preparation for another life. From this religious point of view, mundane desires are due to instinct and lack wisdom and rationality, so that human life in this sense is not essentially different from that of animals, and only by religious inspiration and enlightenment can human beings lift themselves above the level of animals and enter the realm of eternity, the absolute and truth.

The conflict in *The Virgin-Martyr* is overtly between Christianity and paganism, but in actual fact is very much concerned with the clash between different outlooks on love and sex. In contrast to the two Chinese plays, it has full battles on two planes of principles. On the one hand, it concerns the antagonism between two different religions, as the paganism that it portrays has a great amount of religious ingredients, and can be viewed as an nascent religious form in the general development of religion. On the other hand, beneath the surface of such strife between religion and religion an acute conflict between religious moralities and downright anti-religious forces is boiling. In fact, the paganism in this play often represents humanity, its apparent theological form containing apparently supernatural but essentially secular substance,[20] while Christianity stands for divinity, the opposite. That is to say, despite the tension between different species of religions on the plane of subject matter, the dramatic conflict in thematic terms is that between the worldly and the divine, between the present life and afterlife, between hedonism and asceticism, between corporal pleasure with material happiness and spiritual

[20] Cf. this remark: "That myth plays a large part in all primitive religions as well as in the advanced religions of antiquity is beyond dispute, and it may also be admitted that the religions of the present contain many survivals falling within the domain of mythology." Morris Jastrow, "Religion and Mythology", in his *The Study of Religion* (London: Walter Scott, 1901), p. 247.

bliss, all of which disputes are epitomised by that between sexual love and sexual abstinence.

Like the two Chinese plays, this one sharply classifies life into opposite categories: the profane, and the religious, lauding the significance of the latter and belittling the former. It is similarly pervaded by the idea that ordinary human life is illogical, impermanent, and so changeable that its destination is beyond prediction and its direction beyond all control. In *Crazy Ren* and *Character for "Forbearance"*, the present life of the protagonist is illusory. All persons, according to the plays' theological scenario, are simply puppets played by the supernatural and non-human forces, and all the ups and downs of mundane life, its sorrow and joy, hatred and love, living and dying, are simply play-acting. It is by such means that the two Chinese plays indicate the pointlessness of mundane human life. In this respect, *The Virgin-Martyr* is less supernatural in tone, as human life in it develops of its own internal mechanisms rather than under the direction of a supernatural figure's will and personality, and its presents no perceptible views on previous life or predestiny.

The illusory and inconstant nature of human life is typically expressed by the following scene, in which three kings have suddenly fallen into captivity:

> K. of Empire. *We are*
> *Now slaves to thy power, that yesterday were kings,*
> *And command o'er others; we confess*
> *Our grandsires paid your tribute, yet left us,*
> *As their forefathers had, desire of freedom.*[21]

This picture vividly demonstrates how fleeting and unreliable is human fortune: yesterday's majesty and prosperity turn into slavery and adversity overnight. The meaning of the vicissitudes that they have undergone is stressed:

> K. of Pontus. *We stand*
> *The last examples, to prove how uncertain*
> *All human happiness is; and are prepared*
> *To endure the worst.*
> K. of Macedon. *That spoke, which is now highest,*
> *In Fortune's wheel, must, when she turns it next,*
> *Decline as low as we are.*[22]

[21] *The Virgin-Martyr*, in *The Works of British Dramatists*, edited by John S. Keltie and F. S. A. Scot (Edinburgh: W. P. Mimmo, Hay, & Mitchell, 1894), p. 388.
[22] Ibid.

In a certain sense, this statement alone is also a philosophical reflection on the complexity of human life, rather than purely religious preaching or an expression of fatalistic attitude.[23] Nevertheless, this philosophical idea is soon developed into the religious moralising that since human life is unreliable, it should be replaced by divine life, and in this way the issue of conversion arises. The divine life is perpetual beyond logic in ordinary sense, and also transcends the particularity of time and space in the ordinary human sense. This point may be further explained by both Chinese plays: in *Crazy Ren*, the hero is bewildered by three paths where there should only have been one, the spatial logos being chaotic; and in the other play, Junzuo's grandson is even senior to him, the normal temporal order being destroyed. This is characteristic of the temporality of the immortal and the secular as opposed to divine eternality.[24]

Like the Chinese works, the conflict unfolds around the issue of conversion. For instance, when the daughters of Theophilus, a zealous persecutor of Christians, are converted by Dorothea, their father berates them for their blasphemy and says:

> Theoph. . . . *be yourselves again;*
> *Sue to the offended deity.*[25]

But Christeta says: "Not to be the mistress of earth", and Calista responds with the following:

> Cal. *I will not offer*
> *A grain of incense to it but with contempt and scorn,*
> *To have a thousand years conferred upon me*
> *Of worldly blessings. We profess ourselves*
> *To be, like Dorothea, Christians;*
> *And owe her for that happiness.*[26]

This sets out the antagonism between Christian "joy" and "worldly happiness".

The worldly life led by the pagans in the play bears the deep brand of primitive society, being crude and uncivilised. It is based on humans' instincts and their inherent desires, but short on rationality and lacking in spiritual or philosophical quality. It stands

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[23] This is in fact a dialectical idea which epitomises Daoism.

[24] In a pure physical world, A. E. Taylor says: "there might be earlier and later events, but no event would ever be present, past, or future. Again, within the experience of an individual, there may be a before which is not properly to be called a past, and an after which cannot rightly be called a future. I must at least register my own conviction that the purely 'instantaneous' present, the 'knife-edge', as it has been called, is a product of theory, not an experienced actuality." A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., n.d. [c. 1928]), p. 73.

[25] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 398.

[26] Ibid.

in sharp contrast to Christian life which is valued as cultured and civilised. It is depicted as not only uncertain and changeable, but also immoral, full of violence, cruelty, malevolence, jealousy and obscenity, in short sinful[27]. This accords with a major principle of Christian asceticism, the theory of "the inborn sin". In this respect, paganism is located in an earlier stage of history and seen as full of inherent sin, while Christianity, having arrived later, represents civilisation, a negation of both primitivity and paganism.[28] To bolster this interpretation, the primeval humanist elements preserved in mythical legends or pagan tales are resolutely disparaged from a Medieval point of view, further exposing that the play's conflict in thematic terms is essentially between humanism and theology, rather than between religion and religion.

Pleasure-pursuit, regarded as a natural desire from the humanistic point of view, is seen in the play as characteristic of the worldly life associated with paganism, and it is held that such pleasure is fleeting and only achievable at the expense of eternal divine happiness. It is on this point that the humanist outlook stands in violent conflict with religious abstinence and forbearance as embodied by Christian asceticism. In this regard Nietzsche says: "The affirmation of the natural, the sense of innocence in the natural, 'naturalness,' is pagan. The denial of the natural, the sense of degradation in the natural, unnaturalness, is Christian."[29]

The following is a typical scene revealing the nature of this antagonism. When the two daughters of Theophilus tried to persuade Dorothea to give up her Christian belief, their dispute highlights the thematic conflict:

> Dor. . . . *In the place*
> *Of lascivious mirth, he would have stirr'd you*
> *To holy meditations; and so far*
> *He is from flattery, that he would have told you*
> *Your pride being at the height, how miserable*
> *And wretched things you are, that, for an hour*
> *Of pleasure here, has made a desperate sale*
> *Of all your right in happiness hereafter.* [30]

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[27] Similarly in the Chinese plays, secular life is filled with troubles such as murder.

[28] Nietzsche refers to this Christian interpretation as "the great lie in history: as if it was the *corruption* of paganism which opened the road to Christianity!" and goes on: "It was, on the contrary, the weakening and moralization of the man of antiquity! Natural drives had already been reinterpreted as vices!" "Book Two: Critique of Highest Values", 150 (Spring-Fall 1887), in *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Walter Kaufmann (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), pp. 94-5.

[29] Nietzsche, "Book Two: Critique of Highest Values", 147 (Spring-Fall 1887), op. cit., p. 94.

[30] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 396.

In response to this ascetic statement, the girls express their positive attitude toward worldly happiness and do so with pagan terminology:

Christ. *Look on us,*
Ruin'd as you are, once, and brought onto it,
By your persuasion.
Cal. *But what followed, lady?*
Leaving those blessings which our gods gave freely,
And shower'd upon us with a prodigal hand,
As to be noble born, youth, beauty, wealth,
And the free use of these without control,
Check, curb, or stop, such is our law's indulgence!
All happiness forsook us; bonds and fetters,
For amorous twines; the rack and hangman's whips,
In place of choice delights?
. . .
Christ. *This consider'd wisely,*
We made a fair retreat; and reconciled
To our gods, we live again
In all prosperity.
Cal. *By our example,*
Bequeathing misery to such as love it,
Learn to be happy. The Christian's yoke's too heavy
For such a dainty neck; it was framed rather
To be the shrine of Venus, or a pillar,
More precious than crystal, to support
Our Cupid's image; our religion, lady,
Is but a varied pleasure; yours a toil
Slaves would shrink under.[31]

The marrow of paganism is expressed as "but a varied pleasure", whereas Christianity is characterised as "a toil". Although paganism is termed "religion", in fact, it is not theological but mythological and humanistic, as it values all kinds of pleasures in the present life. Moreover, pagan gods lack divinity, the special characteristics of deities, and their morality is identical with that of the mortals, they sharing with human beings the same character, feelings, desires, emotion, ambition and moral standards, in short, the same overall life style, and also sharing the human crimes such as incest and so on. In this play, the mythical theoarchy is no different from the social hierarchy, all gods and goddesses behaving like mortals or even worse than them, for example:

Dor. . . .
Yet Venus, whom you worship, was a whore;
Flora, the foundress of the public stews,
And has, for that, her sacrifice; your great god,

[31] Ibid., p. 396-7.

Your Jupiter, a loose adulterer,
Incestuous with his sister: read but those
That have canonized them, you'll find them worse
Than, in chaste language, I can speak them to you.
Are they immortal then, that did partake
Of human weakness, and had ample share
In men's most base affections; subject to
Unchaste loves, anger, bondage, wounds as men are?
Here Jupiter, to serve his lust, turn'd bull,
The shape, indeed, in which he stole Europa.[32]

This is a misinterpretation of primitive sexuality, as John Atkins says:

> What we today thinks of as licentiousness was extremely rare among primitives. Sex was regarded as a normal activity to be naturally indulged in, by some; by others it was regarded as the fount of life, at times a sacred symbol, even to the point of being rigorously limited and circumscribed according to the demands of a semi-mystical ritual.[33]

Their life is sinful, and has no spiritual bliss but fleshly pleasures only. However, this latter kind of pleasure easily turns into misery of vice-versa, and the pagan gods find themselves subjected to hard toil and tortures, a retribution:

Dor. . . .
Neptune, for grain, builds up the walls of Troy
As a day-labourer, Apollo keeps
Admetus' sheep for bread; the Lemnian smith
Sweats at the forge for hire; Prometheus here,
With his still-growing liver, feeds the vulture;
Saturn bound fast in hell with adamant chains . . .[34]

Human life is viewed as analogous to that of the pagan gods:

Dor. . . .
Your god! your temples! brothel houses rather,
Or wicked actions of the worst of men,
Pursued and practised. Your religious rites!
Oh, call them rather juggling mysteries,
For which the devil angles; your false pleasures
A steep descent, by which you headlong fall
Into eternal torments.[35]

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[32] Ibid., p. 397.
[33] John Atkins, *Sex in Literature: The erotic impulse in literature* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1970), pp. 29-30.
[34] Ibid., p. 397.
[35] Ibid., p. 397.

It is such hedonistic principles that stand in irreconcilable opposition to Christian asceticism. According to the logic of the religion in this play, physical pleasure opposes spiritual bliss, the body the mind or soul. Pleasure is a sin, so human life is by logical deduction sinful.

In this context, the only redemption lies in conversion. Two minor characters in the play illustrate this point. Spungius and Hircius are servants to Dorothea, but are not devout disciples, they still longing for their past hedonistic life. They epitomise the qualities of worldly human life as opposed to the spirituality of Christian doctrines. Spungius is a drunkard and Hircius a whoremonger. As "wine and women's sexual beauty" *(jiu-se)* are deplored vices in the two Chinese plays, "alcohol" and "sex" in this play are the two major categories of profane pleasure which result in and result from the debauchery of morals and the soul. The following dialogue elucidates the thematic conflict:

> Spun. Turn Christian! Would he that first tempted me to have my shoes walk upon Christian soles, **had turn'd me into a capon;** for I am sure now, the stones of all my pleasure, in this fleshly life, are cut off.
>
> Hir. So then, if any coxcombing has a galloping desire to ride, here's a gelding, if he can but sit him.
>
> Spun. I kick, for all that, like a horse; -- look else.
>
> Hir. But that is a kickish jade, fellow Spungius. Have not I as much cause to complain as you hast? When I was a pagan, there was an infidel punk of mine, would have let me come upon trust for my curvetting. . . .
>
> Spun. Bacchus, **the god of brew'd wine and sugar**, grand patron of rob-pots upsy-freesy tipplers, and super-naculum takers; this Bacchus, who is head warden of Vintners' Hall, ale-conner, mayor of all victualling-houses, **the sole liquid benefactor to bawdy-houses**, . . .
>
> . . .
>
> Spun. . . . When I was a pagan, and **kneeled to this Bacchus, I durst out-drink a lord**; but your Christian lords out-bowl me. I was in hope to lead a sober life when I was converted, but now, amongst the Christians, **I can no sooner stagger out of one ale-house**, but I reel into another; they have whole streets of nothing but drinking-rooms and drabbing-chambers jumbled together.
>
> Hir. **Since I left Priapus to follow a scurvy lady, what with her praying and our fasting, if now I come to a wench, she presently handles me as if I were a clove, and cleaves me with disdain, as if I were a calf's head.**
>
> Spun. I see no remedy, fellow Hircius, but that thou and I must be half pagans and half Christian; for we know very fools that are Christian.[36]

Freud also mentioned the partnership between alcohol and sex in European life and literature:

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[36] Emboldenings mine; ibid., pp. 390-1.

> Is it not true that wine always provides the drinker with the same toxic satisfaction, which in poetry has so often been compared to erotic satisfaction -- a comparison acceptable from the scientific point of view? [37]

Alcohol and sex are symbols for all sinful human pleasure. This idea is strikingly similar to that in the Chinese plays, where wine, sex, wealth and ambition (*jiu se cai qi*) are repeatedly itemised as four cardinal sins for human beings.[38]

Two. Death with Pain versus Life with Pleasure

Death functions as a bridge to spiritual life in *The Virgin Martyr*. In contrast to both Chinese plays, death is considered a meaningful and important concept in this drama, and it is owing to this that the play shines with tragic colour. In this work, the present life is deemed beyond redemption, so it is held that the afterlife should be pursued in its stead. Between present life and afterlife comes the transition of death, which, because it terminates the fleshly life and initiates the spiritual life, here is viewed as something positive: "death is an end of every worldly soore",[39] or at least neutral: death "is of no concern to us; for while we exist death is not present, and when death is present, we no longer exist";[40] and still: "therefore, that we have nothing to fear in death. One who no longer is cannot suffer, or differ in any way from one who has never been born, when once this mortal life has been usurped by death the immortal."[41] This corresponds with the central idea that as heaven and earth are never on the same plane, so carnal pleasures and divine bliss can never coexist. In this respect, the two Chinese plays adopt a different stance. Although the idea of "soul versus body" also dominates them, there is a less absolute conflict between flesh and spirit in them by comparison with *The Virgin-Martyr*; and accordingly, the transition from mortality to immortality does not require death as a necessary bridge. Both Chinese protagonists enter the heavenly

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[37] "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 188.

[38] The subject matter of Western literature is classified by Chinese scholars in the mainland into the so called Three Ws: Wine, Women, and War. This, in a certain sense, is a projection of these scholars' national psychology with regard to their own literature and life.

[39] As quoted in Philippa Tristram, "'Olde Stories longe Tyme Agoon': Death and the audience of Chaucer's Pardoner", in Herman Braet & Werner Verbeke (ed.), *Death in the Middle Ages* (Leuven University Press, 1982), pp. 187-8.

[40] Epicurus, as quoted in the editorial note to Lucretius, *We Have Nothing to Fear in Death*, selected in Oswald Hanfling (ed.), *Life and Meaning: A reader* (Basil Balckwell in association with The Open University, 1987), p. 79.

[41] Lucretius, "We Have Nothing to Fear in Death", in Oswald Hanfling (ed.), *Life and Meaning: A reader*, op. cit., p. 79.

realm as a smooth and natural progression without any death or loss of their physical bodies.[42] Tan Lun (ie., Gaoseng or the Top Buddhist Monk) even held that, Buddhist believers could obtain longevity as does Budda, in which case there is no room for the conception of death.[43] Regarding this, the following quote is of relevance:

> In ancient Chinese ideology, there is also a split of the transcendental-ideal world (the so-called the other world [*bishi*]) and the real world (this world [*cishi*]), however, they are neither aloof from nor identical to each other, unlike the sharp contrast in other cultures (the ancient Greek, Israeli [sic] and Indian). This is one of the primary features of Chinese ideology. Although the Daoists distinguished *Fangnei* [Within-Square] and *Fangwai* [Beyond-Square] long ago, later the Daoist concept of immortality still changed from the psychology of "abandoning humanity and leaving the secular" [*jueshi-lisu*] of pre-Qin times to that of "if one turns immortal, one's hen and dog also ascend heaven [*yiren chengxian, jiquan shengtian*]", and even that of being happy to stay in the human world as an "earthly immortal [*dixian*]".[44]

That English play on the contrary enthusiastically embraces the idea of physical death. Scenes of death are depicted vividly, and the psychological attitudes of dying described in great details, simply because death is a sign for the abandonment of the sins of this present life, while dying is a positive step towards moral and spiritual revival. For example, even long before her martyrdom, Dorothea has been fully prepared for death and pain, and explored its significance as the following remarks go to show:

> Dor. . . .
> *The visage of hangman frights not me;*
> *The sight of whips, racks, gibbets, axes, fires,*
> *Are scaffoldings by which my soul climbs up*
> *To an eternal habitation.*[45]

She later adds:

> Dor. *Oh, guard me, angels!*
> *What tragedy must begin now?*
> Anton. *When a tiger*

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[42] This Christian thanatological concept does not necessarily derive from the Bible, as Tristram says: "Was Death natural or unnatural? Was it God's agent or his enemy? To that question the Bible makes only ambiguous answer, and Christian thinking was far from settled in its response. Indeed, a dual resolution is often adopted by English writers". Ph. Tristram, "'Olde Stories Long Tyme Agoon'" , op. cit., p. 189.

[43] Cf. Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo fojiao shi*, vol. 3 (Peking: Zhongguo Shehuikexue Chubanshe, 1988), p. 615.

[44] Yu Shiying, *Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao-lunli yu shangren-jingshen* (Taipei: Lianjing Shiye Chuban-Gongsi, 1987), p. 16.

[45] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 395.

Leaps into a timorous herd, with ravenous jaws,
Being hunger-starv'd, what tragedy then begins?
Dor. *Death; I am happy so; you, hitherto,*
Have still had goodness sphered within your eyes,
Let not that orb be broken.[46]

And when Dorothea is brought to execution, Antoninus refers to her dying as a glorious deed and "blessed action",

Anton. . . .
See, she comes;
How sweet her innocence appears! more like
To heaven itself, than any sacrifice
That can be offer'd to it.
. . .
. . . She ascends,
And every step raises her nearer heaven.[47]

Death is positive, just because life is negative, as Dorothea declares when facing the end of her mortal life:

Dor. *Thou fool!*
That gloriest in having power to ravish
A trifle from me I am weary of.
What is this life to me? not worth a thought;
Or, if it be esteem'd, 'tis that I lose it
To win a better: even thy malice serves
To me but as a ladder to mount up
To such a height of happiness, where I shall
Look down with scorn of thee, and on the world,
Where, circled with true pleasure, placed above
The reach of death or time, 'twill be my glory
To think at what an easy price I bought it.[48]

Philosophically, flesh is a burden for the soul, and logically, death releases the soul from the physical burden and emancipates it, as is seen in the following part of a dialogue:

Ang. . . .
And in that instant when the sword sets free
Your happy soul, . . .[49]

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[46] Ibid., p. 402.
[47] Ibid., p. 405.
[48] Ibid.
[49] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 406.

In this dramatic context, "soul" represents the spirit, as opposed to the "flesh" that symbolises this-worldly life, and thus mind and body are completely split and antagonised. The Chinese plays, however, differ in this regard. In them, death is always viewed negatively, and never happens to the heroes, flesh and soul being a unity. When they abandon worldly life, the heroes are still alive as integral hermit saints but at the same time still in the same human world as flesh-and-blood ordinary humans. When leaving the world for heaven at the very end of the play, they still preserve their corporeal integrality, shedding no blood and undergoing no physical destruction whatsoever. In the Chinese plays, the this-worldly and the other-worldly meet and overlap. Life is always valued and death avoided, and in the mortal world people may lead a lofty-minded and hallowed life, while residents of the immortal world likewise keep their mortal physique. Since the heroes enter heaven with their original physical features, it would be reasonable to imagine that heaven is visualised as similar to the environment in which human beings customarily dwell, and the immortals' life-style as not very different in its outer manifestations from that of the mortal world. Paganism in the West holds similar notions.

Here is the ardent aspiration for death, the strong scent of Stoicism. But the difference is that Stoicism advocates suicide, which is unacceptable for Christianity, not because life is valued, but because suffering in life is admired. Schopenhauer stresses this point:

> We find suicide celebrated by the Stoic as a noble and heroic deed, as might be confirmed by hundreds of extracts, the strongest being from Seneca.[50] . . . Christianity bears in its innermost essence the truth that suffering (the Cross) is the true purpose of life; hence it rejects, as opposed to this, suicide, . . .[51]

Consistent with its attitude towards death, *The Virgin-Martyr* defines "pain" in positive diction. Just as death of the flesh is viewed as a necessary step for the rebirth of spirit, so pain is considered a commendable category as opposed to the sins of pleasure. The more pain, the nearer one is to the spiritual felicity. In this sense, pain, besides being a penalty, is a testimony of morality, a reparation and redemption for sinful pleasure.[52]

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[50] "On Suicide", in Ernest Belfort Bax (ed.), *Selected Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), p. 259.

[51] Ibid., p. 261.

[52] It is seen that, in order to fit the religious mode, human feelings and instincts are arbitrarily tailored, so that the description of the characters' religious passion simply lose its authenticity. As Arthur Symons says: "He [Massinger] has no real mastery over passion, and his eloquence does not appeal to the heart. He interests us strongly; but he has no power to overwhelm or to carry us away", and "his characters oscillate rather than advance, their conversions are without saving effect on their souls, their falls have no damnation. They are alike outside themselves, and they talk of 'my lust', 'my virtue', as of detached and portable conveniences." See *Philip Massinger*, edited by Arthur Symons, 2 vols.

Through physical agony a spiritual solace and comfort are won, the striving towards such inevitably involving pain. This is typical of the Christian conception which civilises the destructive force and justifies the "death instinct" as opposed to the instinct for life that is epitomised by *eros*.[53] Therefore when dealing with death, the play gives spacious coverage to torture and the heroine's reaction to it:

> Dor.
> *No, but pitying,*
> *For my part, I, that you lose ten times more*
> *By torturing me, that I dare your tortures:*
> *Through all the army of my sins, I have even*
> *Labour'd to break, and cope with death to th'face.*
> *This visage of the hangman frights not me;*
> *The sight of whips, racks, gibbets, axes, fires,*
> *Are scaffoldings by which my soul climbs up*
> *To an eternal habitation.*[54]

This proclaims the relationship between physical agony and spiritual comfort and that pain and pleasure are interchangeable. This is a theoretical foundation for a Stoic kind of creed: "the pains which are met with in life are an evil, but with the aid of the discipline of the will, they may be triumphed over".[55] Small wonder that pain, being so fundamental, is sung of and admired to such an extent. As death bestows the sublime glamour, so pain is depicted as beautiful, as, for example, when Dorothea is being cruelly tortured:

> Dor.
> *Joys above joys! are my tormentors weary*
> *In torturing me, and, in my sufferings,*
> *I fainting in no limb! tyrants, strike me home,*
> *And feast your fury full.*
> Theoph. . . . [Comes from his seat.
> *. . . See, my lord, her face,*
> *Has more bewitching beauty than before:*
> *Proud whore, it smiles! cannot an eye start out,*
> *With these?*

(London & New York: [n.p.], 1987-9); as quoted in Martin Garrett, *Massinger: The critical heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 225 & 227.

[53] Helen Gardner says: "It [resurrection] concentrates the imagination of the absoluteness and finality of death, as the great test for faith. No other religious tradition has stressed as the Christian tradition has the duty of contemplating death and preparing for death. In the later Middle Ages it comes to obsess the religious imagination." See Helen Gardner, *Religion and Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 73.

[54] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 395.

[55] T. A. Dunn, *Philip Massinger: The man and the playwright* (Ghana: Thomas Nelson & Son Ltd., 1957), p. 193.

. . .
Ang. *There fix thine eye still; thy glorious crown must come,*
Not from soft pleasure, but by martyrdom.
There fix thine eye still; when we next do meet,
Not thorns, but roses, shall bear up my feet:
There fix thine eye still.[56]

The sacrifice involved in pain as sacrifice must be compensated:

Dor. *I am largely paid*
For my tortures. Since I found such grace,
In which he languisheth death, may be
Changed to the love of heaven.[57]

After her death, the Stoic theme is maintained by Theophilus, who has repented for his cruelty to Christians, and is developed into a sort of masochism.[58] He transfers his cruelty and applies the torture instruments which he invented for Christians to himself. In this way, pain retains its moral value and philosophical implications. For instance, on hearing him declare that he has been converted to Christianity, Caesar orders that he be tortured, but this is welcomed by Theophilus:

Theoph. *Hear me, yet,*
Hear, for my service past.
Artem. *What will he say?*
Theoph. *As ever I deserved your favour, hear me,*
And grant one boon: 'tis not for life I sue for;
Nor is it fit that I, that ne'er knew pity
To any Christian, being one myself,
Should look for any; No, I rather beg
The utmost of your cruelty. I stand
Accountable for thousand Christian's deaths;
And, were it possible that I could die
A day for every one, then live again
To be again tormented, 'twere to me
An easy penance, and I should pass through
A gentle cleaning fire: but that denied me,
It being beyond the strength of feeble nature,
My suit is you would have no pity on me.
In mine own house there are thousand engines
For miserable Christians; let me feel

[56] Ibid., p. 404.
[57] Ibid., p. 406.
[58] As it is concerned with the religious idea on sin and punishment, crime and retribution. As A. E. Taylor says: "A further peculiarity of the genuinely ethical attitude towards sin seems to me to be that recognition of our guilt is regularly attended by what we may call a *demand* for punishment." A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., n.d. [1928]), p. 182.

As the Sicilian did his brazen bull,
The horrid'st you can find; and I will say,
In death, that you are merciful.
. . .
[Re-enter guards with racks and other instruments of torture.
Diocle. *Bind him, I say;*
Make every artery and sinew crack:
The slave that makes him give loudest shriek,
Shall have ten thousand drachmas. Wretch! I will force thee
To curse the power you worship'st.
Theoph. *Never, never:*
No breath of mine shall e'er be spent on him,
[They torment him.
But what shall speak his majesty or mercy.
I'm honour'd in my suffering. Weak tormentors,
More tortures, more, -- Alas! you are unskilful --
For heaven's sake more, my breast is yet untorn:
Here purchase the reward that was propounded.
The irons cool,-- here are arms yet, and thighs;
Spare no part of me.
Max. *He endures beyond*
The sufferance of a man.
Sap. *No sigh nor groan,*
To witness he hath feeling.[59]

Theoretically, this kind of religious zeal results from the alienation of human nature, which has fallen out of normality, as Ward says:

> His personages seem for the most part labelled with the qualities they are intended to represent; there is no mistaking them as *dramatis personae*, but there is some difficulty in understanding them as human beings.[60]

Arthur Symons holds a similar view:

> Where Massinger most conclusively fails is in a right understanding and a right representation of human nature; in the power to conceive passion and bring its speech and action vividly and accurately before us. His theory of human nature is apparently that of the puppet-player.[61]

The dominant personality of the characters is not within the characters' own control, but dependent on the author's subjective inclinations. Again Arthur Symons says:

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[59] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 410.
[60] A. W. Ward, as quoted in Martin Garrett, *Massinger: The critical heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 185.
[61] Arthur Symons, *Philip Massinger*, op. cit., p. 224.

> Where Massinger fails is in the power of identifying himself with his characters, at least in their moments of profound passion or strenuous action. At his best (or almost his best, for of course there are exceptions) he succeeds on the one hand in representing the gentler and secondary passions and emotions; on the other, in describing the action of the primary passions very accurately and admirably, but as it were, in the third person, and from the outside. As Mr. Leslie Stephen says with reference to a fine speech of Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, 'Read "he" for "I" and "his" for "my", and it is an admirable bit of denunciation of a character probably intended as a copy from real life.'[62]

In this play, pain and death are the common destination and the glory of it is pursued by many positive characters, as the vital sacrifice for spiritual rebirth and moral sublimity. For example, facing Dorothea's death, Antoninus expresses his desire for death as follows:

> Anton. *Oh, Marcrinus!*
> *'Twould linger out my torments else, not kill me,*
> *Which is the end I aim at: being to die too,*
> *What instrument more glorious can I wish for,*
> *Than what is made sharp by my constant love*
> *And true affection? It may be, the duty*
> *And loyal service, with which I pursued her,*
> *Among her blessed actions: and what honour*
> *Can I desire beyond it?*[63]

Such glad physical pain and violent emotional agony have no room in the Chinese plays, where instead, leisure, spiritual bliss and tranquillity prevail as the goals and atmospheres of conversion. The religiously reclusive life-style of the saints in them does not differ in form from the leisurely idyllic life of the mortal world. Generally, this idea runs counter to Christian asceticism in the genuine sense, and is echoed by Calvinism -- an apostate sect -- which promotes the "combination of practical sense and cool utilitarianism with another-worldly aim."[64] Physical pain is allowed no slightest room as far as the protagonists are concerned. Although there are some scenes of murder and agonising moments of psychological conflict, yet all of these are treated with a light touch and humour, unlike *The Virgin-Martyr* in which the excitingly tragic atmosphere is deliberately escalated. In both Chinese dramas, any solemn mood is quickly diluted.[65]

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[62] Ibid., p. 225.

[63] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 405.

[64] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931), p. 609.

[65] Concerning this difference from the Western religious concept, Daniel Reid says: "The focus of all Western religions is the 'after life', and most believers manifest a morbid concern with the fate of their souls after death. As such Western religions are idealistic rather than practical, more concerned

Religion in the ordinary Chinese sense, no matter whether Buddhist or Daoist, is much more concerned with human beings and their present life than any other kind of life,[66] which is why:

> Chinese have always tried to avoid the topic of "death." [sic] This holds for both popular custom and the world of scholarship. The only wisdom left behind by Confucianism, that most influential of Chinese canons, was Confucius's statement that, "we do not yet understand the mysteries of life, so how can we understand death?" Thus there has never been any deep discussion of the matter.[67]

Confucianism has not been a religion but a doctrine worshipped religiously, thus making it in a certain sense a secularised form of religion which is in hidden communication with both Buddhism and Daoism in Chinese forms. Compatible with the latter two, Confucianism holds similar principles about life and death. An interview with Charles Fu expresses this point:

> Q: Chinese people are under the influence of Confucian thinking, which considers damage to one's body to be unfilial to one's parents. This often leads to different positions when discussing current suicide, Do you believe the individual has the freedom to decide whether and how to continue his or her own life?
>
> A: Confucianism has never placed much importance on individual rights. . . . Death is a personal matter. . . . If someone really wishes to kill themselves [sic.], we are powerless to stop them, because death is not a mundane concern, but a problem that involves **a high degree of spirituality and religiosity and which transcends every affair**.[68]

Interestingly enough, in these beliefs such opposite concepts as worldly pleasure and religious happiness are not irreconcilable, the latter being deemed realisable in the mortal world by the leading of a reclusive life as pure-minded hermit.[69] Unlike some of the

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with the next world than this one." From D. Reid, *The Tao of Health, Sex and Longevity: A modern, practical approach to the ancient way* (London, Sydney, etc.: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 4.

[66] Christianity is obviously different, and Hinduism lays emphasis on Nature to which man is neither slave nor master. Admittedly Buddhism also stresses *samaras* (*lunhui*, transmigration) between animals and human beings, and Daoism promotes the harmony between man and the universe, but neither puts more positive value on death than life. Their religious outlooks in these respects have been secularised.

[67] Fu Peirong, "The Dignity of Death and the Dignity of Life", *Sinorama*, v. 19, n. 5, May 1994, p. 86.

[68] Emboldenings mine, Xue Wenyu (interviewer & ed.), "Encounter with Death -- an Interview with Charles Fu" (Chinese title: *Xiaosa zouguo siwang -- Fu Weixun zhuanfang*"), *Sinorama*, op. cit., p, 92.

[69] Daniel Reid says: "Dualist Western philosophy splits the spiritual and physical realms into two hostile and mutually exclusive spheres and attaches superior value to the former. Taoism regards the physical and spiritual as an indivisible yet distinctly different aspect of the same reality, with the body serving as the root for the blossom of the mind." (*The Tao*, op, cit., p. 5.) The same is true of Buddhist

outside world's more austere religious creeds, Chinese religious outlooks have by and large been fairly flexible and tolerant. To achieve the blissful life is not considered to demand suffering as its cost, as such life is still within the same plane of reality, and accordingly, even if the hero leaves the human world for an immortal realm, his physical constitution does not need to die. In other Chinese mythical and literary works, the immortals likewise share the same physical make-up and appearance as mortals, and the immortal realm or heaven is no more than a better version of the mortal world. And even if Death becomes unavoidable, instead of vehement, violent and agonising conflicts internal or external, there is, as Arthur Waley puts it, a "lyrical acceptance of death"[70].

The religious life, in both its this-worldly and immortal manifestations, is viewed in these two Chinese plays as a pleasure not only for its religious qualities but also for pleasures shared with ordinary mortal life, bringing joy and comfort both physical and spiritual. In *Crazy Ren* for example, the hero is a hermit in religious terms, but is what some might, not necessarily with secure justification, nowadays term an escapist in sociological terms. As a matter of fact, his main inclination seems rather to be not towards religion but towards aloofness from ordinary mundane reality. That is to say, what he seeks for is not theological blessings, but the avoidance of worldly troubles. In other words, his quest in abandoning certain worldly pleasures is not for elusive and abstract metaphysical things, but for immediate and pleasant tranquillity, regardless of whether it is to be of short duration or everlasting. In this respect a kind of eclecticism is perceptible. The following describes the nature of the sort of life quested after:

CRAZY REN.

I have planted five green willow trees around the door and window,
I have grown three line of chrysanthemums near the thatch hut.
From the master I learn to catch tiger and dragon,
ride phoenix and crane.
Who, any longer, slaughters horses and slays cows,
kills dogs and butchers donkeys!?
. . .
Why should I long for the hard job of dealing with pigs and dogs,
Why should I long for a limited life for jade rabbits and gold crows?!
I have limitless self-cultivating,
I have abundant enjoyments.
Here live red-crested cranes and mottled deer,
Here tigers howl in the wind and monkeys cry in the wilderness.
Clouds fill the window and moonlight is shed over the gate,
The paths are covered by flowers and the pot is filled with wine.
Breeze pushes the door curtain,

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philosophical outlook in traditonal Chinese interpretations, and Buddhism and Daoism in practice converge in many of their terms.

[70] As quoted in D. Reid, *The Tao*, op. cit., p. 4.

The tripod is full of incense.
I study the Daoist canon and learn the Daoist magic,
My small thatch hut is really agreeable.
The four seasons do not differ from one another:
In spring I appreciate flowers in the garden,
In summer I live in the valley for coolness,
In autumn I enjoy chrysanthemums and pine trees near the hedges,
In winter I see the plum blossom and bamboo in front of the snow capped eaves.
The bright moon and fresh breeze are my companions.
I neither drink wine nor have sex,
I neither pursue wealth nor cherish ambition.[71]

The worldly colouring in this passage is fairly clear. Such a beautiful natural environment and tranquil life is not only suited to the cultivation of religious spirituality, but can also be viewed as pleasant for ordinary laymen, being psychologically healthy and physically pleasant, a combination of holy realm and mundane world, a veritable "cave paradise" (*dongtian*) or "paradise on earth".

Of quite a few historical figures mentioned in his dialogues, some ancient saintly or high-mindedly reclusive people who are not generally reputed as religious immortals or as having supernatural powers, are alluded to and mentioned as models whom the hero is trying to emulate, such as Tao Yuanming (372-427) and Fan Li (5th century BC). Historically these are scholars and statesmen who led a reclusive but lay life, rather than hermits in the religious sense. What they were pursuing was tranquillity in the present life rather than a slipping into afterlife. What they avoided was the commonplace of urban society and philistine vulgarity, not life as such. And what they inclined towards was non-human Nature rather than anti-humanist religion. They were "escapists", but not monks. In this play, these historical figures are set up as examples to be followed by the protagonist, this suggesting mundane and social intentions on his part in addition to his religious zeal. Clearly, Ren is not seeking after pain and death, but for a higher quality of civilised pleasure.

A very similar situation is found in *Character for "Forbearance"*, in which there are promoted concepts of tranquillity and relaxation, as replacers of spiritual agitation, psychological tension, physical strain and violent action, and any appreciation of torture or desire for death is utterly eschewed. The spiritual cultivation of the noble-minded hermit does not demand the repudiation of physical delectation. On the contrary, it is characterised by physical comforts of a certain kind, considered as vital and complementary to psychological calm and spiritual solace. The spiritual life is not somewhere beyond the bounds of this world but resides within a present and enduring

[71] *Ren Feng-zi*, op. cit., p. 1675-6.

life, and death is not regarded as a boundary-marker delineating the termination of the present mundane life and the initiation of divine afterlife. So, when the protagonist is converted, he simply continues his same one life on a higher plane, sometimes higher only in a metaphysical sense and in fact still located on this earth, in the same sphere as that of mundane life. The difference is principally that this new life and its physical environment are more beautiful and more pleasant, as minutely painted in the quote above from the aria on page 1068 (*Yuanqu xuan*). [72]

Three. Mind versus Body -- Emotional Transformation and Moral Purification

Like both Chinese plays, *The Virgin-Martyr* makes mind and body oppose each other from a religious point of view, but the latter affords us much more vivid descriptions of the subtle psychology of the protagonists, especially that of the hero who undergoes the transformation from carnal desire for his love to a theological aspiration for an abstract divine idol, from the level of soiled and debauched body to purified and elevatedmind.[73] In this context, the realm of "mind" governs such concepts as spirit, soul, wisdom, morality, virtue, immortality, eternity, the absolute, truth and so on, while "body" is associated with an equally wide range of concepts such as material fortune, fleshly fruition, sexual desire, carnal sensuality, hedonism, licentiousness, the amoral and immoral, uncertainty, changeability, the relative, the limited, the untrue, illusion, and falsehood. This is typical of his works in general, as A. H. Cruickshank says:

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[72] Bao Liang (444-509) interpreted Buddhist-Spirit (*Foxing*) as *bi-ku qiu-le*, "avoiding pain and seeking pleasure". Cf. Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo fojiao shi*, vol. 3 (Peking: Zhongguo Shehuikexue Chubanshe, 1988), p. 383; and according to *Pusa jieben* (*Bodhisattvas' Forbearance*) even such behaviour as killing, adultery and seeking wealth are not considered as violation of the forbearance (Cf. p. 165). Schopenhauer believes Buddhism "is throughout expressly atheistic" -- See "Fragments of the History of Philosophy", in Ernest Belfort Bax (ed.), *Selected Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), p. 150 -- and he goes even further: "The Buddhists, in consequence of their deeper ethical and metaphysical insights, do not start from cardinal virtues, but from cardinal vices, as the antitheses or negations of which the cardinal virtues first appear." According to J. J. Schmidt's 'History of the Eastern Mongolians,' [sic.] the cardinal vices of the Buddhists are lust, idleness, anger, and greed." See Schopenhauer, "On Ethics", in *Selected Essays*, op. cit., p. 7.

[73] This situation is similar to that in some of his other plays, in which love standing for passion and lust is arbitrarily placed in antagonism toward the reason and virtue which characterise Christianity. Typical of such plays are *The Renegado* and *The Maid of Honour*. In the former, conflict takes place on the phenomenal level between Christianity and Islam, when "Vitelli is torn between his sincere desire to act virtuously and according to Christian principles and his passionate love for the seductive Mohammedan princess Donusa. It is in effect Massinger's frequent reflected conflict of reason and the passions". (T. A. Dunn, *Philip Massinger*, op. cit., p. 181.) In the latter, after a long oscillation between love and religious commitment, the play still ends with the assertive approval of "the supremacy of the good, the religious, the Christian, way of life." (ibid. p. 183.) Apart from these three, "Massinger does not put religion in the forefront of any play." (ibid., p. 184.)

> It must be confessed that Massinger's conception of love is apt to be earthly, physical, sensuous; there is but little in his plays about the marriage of true minds, too much about "Hymen's taper" and "Virgin forts". Captivated by the charms of female beauty, his intellect is too concrete in its ideals to rise above mere mortality to the mysteries of the diviner love. [74]

When mundane life is condemned in *The Virgin-Martyr*, sexual love is taken as the major target, and therefore the conflict between religiousness and mundanity is easily simplified to that between love and sexual abstinence. This is a negative proof of the importance of love's status. In this play, it is from time to time implied that love and sex are in themselves immoral, instinctive and a major category of "inborn sin".[75] What many might well view as essential features of true love, for instance fundamental rationality, cultured sensitivity to others, aesthetic finesse, deep philosophy and the highest peak of unselfish morality, are entirely ignored and excluded.

When Dorothea itemises the evil behaviours and savage acts of the pagan gods, recriminations focus on their sexual affairs. She curses pagan temples as a "brothel-houses", Venus as nothing but "a whore" and Jupiter as just "a loose adulterer, incestuous with his sister". Jupiter is in no way above mortal tendencies: he turned Europa into a bull "to serve his lust". From a different angle, these "immoral" deeds of the pagan gods can be viewed as forming most vigourous and beautiful elements of myth, and affording an important perspective on human life. They convey a human-like atmosphere, and reflect the simplicity of love styles that we associate with the childhood of mankind. It is precisely because this is so, that in this play they are scorned and deprecated. Another illustration occurs when Dorothea rejects the girls' attempts to persuade her to relinquish Christianity, but attempts to convert them instead. Her remarks often harp on the sexual:

> Dor. . . .
> *Tell me, Calista, by truth, I charge you,*
> *Or anything you hold more dear, would you,*
> *To have him deified to posterity,*
> *Desire your father an adulterer,*
> *A ravisher, almost a parricide,*

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[74] A. H. Cruickshank, *Philip Massinger* op. cit., p. 62.

[75] Christian asceticism directly inherits from Gnosticism, which is a fusion of Western and Eastern philosophies accelerated by Alexander the Great, and which tends to believe in a dualism of God and the world. "The former was spiritual; the latter, physical. . . . a pneumatic morality requires the reflection of the world and of all mundane ties, . . . [it] was the direct precursor of asceticism, **whose ideas were to strike at the heart of the marital relationship.**" Emboldenings mine; see Bernard I. Murstein, "Jesus and the Dawn of Christianity" , in his *Love, Sex, and Marriage through the Ages*, op. cit., pp. 86-7.

A vile incestuous wretch?[76]

Dor. *Or you, Christeta,*
To be hereafter register'd a goddess,
Give your chaste body up to the embraces
Of goatish lust? have it writ on your forehead,
The mistress in the art of wantonness,
Know every trick, and labyrinth of desires
That are immodest?[77]

In moulding its two representative images of sensual gratification, the drunkard and the whoremonger, the play makes sex rather than alcohol its major object of attack, as is amply shown by dialogue between the drunkard and the whore-master (on page 390-1 in *The Works of British Dramatists*), and also by the emotional entanglements between Antoninus and Dorothea. Strictly speaking, mutual love hardly occurs in this play: Antoninus is fiercely in love with Dorothea, but she never acknowledges this mundane amour of his, while Artemia loves Antoninus ardently, but her affection is not appreciated either. This triangular relationship encompasses a character-system which combines to express particular notions of love. Antoninus' love is refused by Dorothea, because his feelings basically rest at such a low, mundane level, being fleshly rather than spiritual. Her rejection of his feelings represents a negation of love as a concept, which negation accords with the central idea of the play. Similarly, the reason why Artemia's affection is not acceptable is that, Antoninus has the potential to become a spiritual lover, and it is precisely for this potential that Artemia is not his type. Religious consciousness is once in play. Viewed more dispassionately, Artemia's emotion would in fact seem to have some obviously positive value by non-religious standards. She loves Antoninus for his bravery, heroic merit, and youthful vitality, and even though an imperial princess loves him who is of a much lower social status than herself, in short loving him for love's sake. Her impulsive love could well have been fully developed into the splendid subject matter for a romance, but the play is oblivious to its value, so such mundane feelings are callously rejected, thematically, and hurriedly brushed aside, in their potential contribution to dramatic structure, and the plot is accordingly arranged in such a way that Antoninus in chasing Dorothea is converted, and his love transmuted into religious zeal and Platonic admiration.

The heroine plays the role of "the virgin". She is literally a virgin who is averse to sexual lover and observes the strictest chastity, but she is also a symbolic personality of

[76] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 397.
[77] Ibid., p. 397.

the type who keeps a great distance from all spiritual sins and represents virtues in general, with all the metaphorical rapport and secure logical connection between these two aspects. This is demonstrated in the following: when Marcrinus tells her of Antoninus' love and praises his virtue, valour, nobility, honour, virility and manliness, her response is not as natural and human as it would surely have been from a woman of mundane emotions:

Mac. *I then must study*
A new arithmetic, to sum up the virtues
Which Antoninus gracefully become.
There is in him so much man, so much goodness,
So much of honour, and of all things else,
Which make our being excellent, that from his store
He can enough lend others: yet much ta'en from him,
The want shall be as when seas
Lend from their bounty, to fill up the poorness
Of needy rivers.
Dor. *Sir, he is more indebted*
To you for praise, than you to him that owes it.
Mac. *If queens, viewing his presents paid to the whiteness*
Of your chaste hand alone, should be ambitious
But to be parted in their numerous shares;
This counts nothing: could you see main armies
Make battle in the quarrel of his valour,
This 'tis the best, the truest; this were nothing:
The greatness of his state, his father's voice
And arm, awing Caesarea, he ne'er boasts of;
The sunbeams which the emperor throws upon him,
Shine there but as in water, and gild him
Not with one spot of pride: no, dearest beauty,
All these, heap'd up together in one scale,
Cannot weigh down the love he bears to you
Being put into the other.
Dor. *Could gold buy you*
To speak thus for a friend, you, sir, are worthy
Of more than I will number; and this your language
Hath power to win upon another woman,
'Top of whose heart the feathers of the world
Are gaily stuck: but all which first you named,
And now this last, his love, to me are nothing.[78]

In this exposition of the battle between love and religion, Dorothea's image is thus an icon for spirituality and hostility to all mundane emotion, whilst of the human desires which Antoninus embodies sexual impulse is the strongest. He is quite mistaken to view

[78] Ibid., p. 393.

her as a particular individual personality of flesh, since, by her total absorption into a general ideology she is instead a spiritual and metaphysical abstract concept, and it is here that lie the tragic misunderstanding and the irreconcilable antagonism. Undeniably, he also feels spiritual admiration for her, although sexual feelings are more fundamental in his attitude towards her, and he depicts her as "a noble casket, wherein lie beauty and chastity in their full perfections"[79]. Before that her looks have been referred to by Macrinus as "dearest beauty"[80], and in Act One Antoninus says that what he desires is "enjoying divinest Dorothea"[81], and his meaning is specified when he adds that he wants to "rule [her] as becomes a husband"[82]. That her sexual charms play the primary part in his affection for her, even though there is a moral element for him in those charms, is further corroborated by the following example:

> Anton. *But can there be*
> *In such a noble casket, wherein lie*
> *Beauty and chastity in their full perfections,*
> *A rocky heart, killing with cruelty*
> *A life that's prostrated beneath your feet.*[83]

Clearly such ardour is erotic, even the chastity, and is a worshipful submission very much to her external feminine qualities. The clash between their attitudes is underlined by the following exchange:

> Dor. *I am guilty of a shame I yet ne'er know,*
> *Thus to hold parley with you; -- pray, sir, pardon.*
> [Going.
> Anton. *Good sweetness, you now have it, and shall go:*
> *Be but so merciful, before your wounding me*
> *With such a mortal weapon as Farewell,*
> *To let me murmur to your virgin ear,*
> *What I was loath to lay on any tongue*
> *But this mine own.*
> Dor. *If any immodest accent*
> *Fly out, I hate you everlastingly.*
> Anton. *My true love dares not do it!*[84]

From the above it is seen that love in the sexual sense is always taboo to Dorothea, as she considers virginity an essential trait of religiosity. She too talks about love, but for

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 390.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 393.
[84] Ibid., p. 394.

her it is something religiously asexual, essentially inimical to sexual love, as the carefully analytical and puissant dispute below shows, in no way beating about the bush about it:

> Anton. *Come, let me tune you: -- glaze not thus your eyes*
> *With self-love of a vow'd virginity,*
> *Make every man your glass; you see our sex*
> *Do never murder propagation;*
> *We all desire your sweet society,*
> *But if you bar from it, you do kill me,*
> *And of my blood are guilty.*
> . . .
> Dor. *Sir, for your fortunes, were they mines of gold,*
> *He that I love is richer; and for worth,*
> *Your are to him lower than any slave*
> *Is to a monarch.*
> . . .
> *Can I, with wearing out my knees before him,*
> *Get you but his servant, you shall boast*
> *You're equal to a king.*
> . . .
> Anton. *Your mocks are great ones, none beneath the sun*
> *Will I be servant to. -- On my knees I beg it,*
> *Pity me, wondrous maid.*
> . . .
> Dor. *Ho, kneel not, sir, to me.*
> Anton. *This knee is an emblem of an humbled heart:*
> *That heart which tortured is with your disdain,*
> *Justly for scorning others, even this heart,*
> *To which for pity such a princess sues,*
> *As in her hand offers me all the world.*
> *Great Caesar's daughter.*
> . . .
> *Yet this*
> *Is adamant to her, that melts to you*
> *In drops of blood.*[85]

Antoninus' worldly love is not only rejected. We should turn attention to the more intriguing fact that his love is not static in nature, but undergoes transformation with time as the plot unfolds, transmogrifying into a mixture of sexual delirium and religious zeal. Along with this process, the theological and spiritual side of the play takes more and more precedence over the carnal one, and eventually, his spirit is purified, his body abandoned and his soul elevated into immortality. This course of development is in accord with the central theme of conversion, in demonstrating the overwhelming

[85] Ibid.

assimilative power of religion and representing the victory of spirit over body, which substitutes an abstract religious virtue for the amour of the individualities.[86]

This thematic point is implied as early as Scene 3 of Act Two, when Antoninus courts but is firmly declined, and then says:

> *Perhaps*
> *'Tis my religion makes you knit the brow;*
> *Yet be you mine, and ever be your own:*
> *I ne'er will screw our conscience from that power*
> *On which you Christian lean.*[87]

On the surface, this is, as we have seen, an intra-religious conflict, this scene is also a more general ethical one, the paganism being latent with humanistic implications. In the event, the victory is of asceticism over hedonism, and religion over humanism. The plot depicts with forceful strokes the transformation of overwhelming sexual ardour into spiritual admiration and religious worship, which is hardly explainable unless from the viewpoint of religiosity.[88] In Scene 1 of Act Four, on Antoninus' first reappearance after Act Two, his *maladie d'amour* is at an advanced state:

> Mac. *I have been*
> *His keeper in this sickness, with such eyes*
> *As I have seen my mother watch o'er me;*
> *And, from that observation, sure I find*
> *It is a midwife must deliver him.*
> Sap. *Is he with child? A midwife!*
> Mac. *Yes, with child;*
> *And will, I hear, lose life, if by a woman,*
> *He is not brought to bed. Stand by his pillow*
> *Some little while, and, in his broken slumbers,*
> *Him shall you hear cry out on Dorothea;*
> *And, when his arms fly open to catch her,*
> *Closing together, he fall fast asleep,*
> *Pleased with embracing her airy form.*
> *Physicians but torment him, his disease*
> *Laughs at their gibberish language; let him hear*
> *The voice of Dorothea, nay, but the name,*

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[86] John Hick argues: "It is necessary first to distinguish the two kinds of love signified by the Greek words *eros* and *agape*. . . . Eros is 'desiring love', love evoked by the desirable qualities of the beloved. . . . Unlike *eros*, *agape* is unconditional and universal in its range. . . . The nature of *agape* is to value a person in such wise as actively to seek his or her deepest welfare and happiness." *Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 11.

[87] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 394.

[88] It is general that "variety of interests is secured, but sometimes at the sacrifice of evolution, and the personages act, not as human creatures must, but as theatrical puppets should." Edmund Gosse, *The Jacobean Poets* (a University Extension Manual), (London: 1894); selected in Martin Garrett, *Massinger: The Critical heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 235.

She, or none, cures him; and how that can be,
The princess' strict command barring that happiness,
To me impossible seems.[89]

The proportion of sexual to the more spiritual constituents of his longing is unclear at this point, when, although his feelings soon begin their elevation away from physical desire, Dorothea's image is simultaneously worshipped as religious icon and sexual idol as well, as the following confirms:

Anton. Myself, Macrinus!
How can I be myself, when I am mangled
Into a thousand pieces? Here moves my head,
But where's my heart? Wherever -- that lies dead.[90]

From this point onward, the diction acquires ever more religious hue, at the same time increasingly highlighting the spiritual aspects of his passion for her:

Re-enter SAPRITIUS, dragging DOROTHEA by the hair, ANGELO following.
Sap. *Follow me, you damn'd sorceress! Call up thy spirit,*
And, if they can, now let them from my hand
Untwine these witching hairs.
Anton. *I am that spirit,*
Or, if I be not, were you not my father,
One made of iron should hew that hand in pieces,
That so defaces this sweet monument
Of my love's beauty.
Sap. *Art you sick?*
Anton. *To death.*
Sap. *Wouldst you recover?*
Anton. *Would I live in bliss!*[91]

In this process, the marrow of the dramatic conflict between Dorothea and the pagans becomes clearer: it is a battle between the pure and beautiful spiritual world and the sinful and evil mundane world, in the course of which Antoninus is being tempered and transformed by Christianity in a non-ritualistic conversion, his love transcending the mundane and being absorbed by religious ideology, while the nature of Dorothea's value to him is also changing from that of worldly flesh to heavenly spirit. For example, when Dorothea is about to be executed, Antoninus speaks the following on the execution ground:

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[89] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 401.
[90] Ibid., p. 401.
[91] Ibid., p. 402.

Anton. *Is this the place, where virtue is to suffer,*
And heavenly beauty, leaving this base earth,
To make a glad return from whence it came?
. . .
Then with her dies
The abstract of all sweetness that's in woman!
Set me down, friend, that, ere that iron hand
Of death close up mine eyes, they may at once
Take my last leave both of this light and her:
For, she being gone, the glorious sun himself
To me's Cimmerian darkness.[92]

His feeling as described above is termed as "strange affection" by Macrinus, because it is no longer understandable from the secular point of view. As Dorothea becomes a holy icon, and Antoninus' sexual inclination is largely replaced by spiritual adoration, peace apparently breaks out in the conflict between love and asceticism, with the final defeat of Antoninus' profane yearnings, but in fact the struggle has shifted and continues as one between the ethically evil and benign. By now, however, Antoninus and Dorothea fight together on the same philosophical front, in pious not carnal unity:

Anton. *Nay, weep not;*
Though tears of friendship be a sovereign balm,
On me they are cast away. It is decreed
That I must die with her, our clue of life
Was spun together.[93]

Parallel to his conversion, as he witnesses the cruel barbarity of paganism, his sense of justice is aroused, and he abandons paganism for Christianity.

The play stresses over and over again that carnal love is immoral, and accordingly Antoninus' passion for Dorothea is gradually desexualised and converted into spiritual adoration, his instinctive impulses being suppressed and overcome, in short body coming under the control of mind. This point is highlighted in the first scene of Act Four, where Antoninus is undergoing a highly intensified psychological tug-of-war between the desire for sex and a morality of forbearance. He is left in the presence of Dorothea.

Dor. *What is your horrid purpose, sir? Your eye*
Bears danger in it.
Anton. *I must --*
Dor. *What?*
Sap. (Within.) *Speak it out.*
Anton. *Climb that sweet virgin tree.*

[92] Ibid., p. 404.
[93] Ibid., p. 405.

Sap. (Within.) *Plague o' your virgin tree.*
Anton. *And pluck that fruit which none, I think, e'er tasted.*
Sap. (Within.) *A soldier, and stand fumbling so!*
Dor. *Oh, kill me,* [Kneels.
And heaven will take it as a sacrifice;
But , if you play the ravisher, there is
A hell to swallow you.[94]

Mere fleshly lust is further assailed and a more moral form of sexual love promoted:

Anton. *Rise: -- for the Roman empire, Dorothea,*
I would not wound thine honour. Pleasures forced,
Are unripe apples, sour, not worth the plucking:
Yet, let me tell you, 'tis my father's will,
That I should seize upon you as my prey;
Which I abhor, as much as the blackest sin
The villainy of man did ever act.[95]

The preference for morality is reinforced in the following scene when a slave is summoned and ordered to ravish her, but resists this malevolent instruction. The high-mindedness of a "mere" slave stresses the dastardliness of the order:

Mac. *A slave is come; what now?*
Sap. *Thou hast hones and flesh*
Enough to play thy labour; . . .
. . .
Thou, *shalt, be no slave, for I will set thou*
Upon a piece of work is fit for man;
Brave for a Briton: -- drag that thing aside,
And ravish her.
Slave. *And ravish her! is this your manly service?*
A devil scorns to do it; 'tis for a beast,
A villain, not a man: I am, as yet,
But half a slave; but , when that work is past,
A damned whole one, a black ugly slave,
The slave of all base slaves: -- do't thyself, Roman,
'Tis drudgery fit for thee.[96]

Dorothea for her part is the model of the opposite of carnal lust, of chaste morals and physical virginity. To begin with, her image for Antoninus is a perfect unity of beauty and virtue, or, put another way, an object for both his physical impulses and spiritual admiration, but eventually her image undergoes such sanctification that she ceases to be a full figure of flesh and blood, being left as almost nothing but a pale and holy phantom.

[94] Ibid., p. 402.
[95] Ibid., p. 402.
[96] Ibid.

For Antoninus, she becomes "a masterpiece of nature", from whom he can receive "a boundless happiness", and he declares, "With her dies / The abstract of all sweetness that's in woman!" and, "She being gone, the glorious sun himself / To me's Cimmeran darkness." She herself also paints her own portrait:

> Dor. . . .
> *What is this life to me? not worth a thought;*
> *Or, if it be esteem'd, 'tis that I lose it*
> *To win a better: even thy malice serves*
> *To but as a ladder to mount up*
> *To such a height of happiness, where I shall*
> *Look down with scorn on thee, and on the world,*
> *Where, circled with true pleasures, placed above*
> *The reach of death or time, 'twill be my glory*
> *To think at what easy price I bought it.*
> *There's a perpetual spring, perpetual youth: . . .*[97]

She straightforwardly and fervently wishes that his love for her be transferred and turned into a love for God, this rejection of ego thus re-emphasising her view that ideology has primacy over her existence as an individual entity:

> Dor. *I am largely paid*
> *For all my torments. Since I find such grace*
> *Grant that the love of that young man to me,*
> *In which he languished to death, may be*
> *Changed into the love of heaven.*[98]

The wish is soon realised, when her image for him is turned into "a heavenly Dorothea" and eventually provokes him to a "religious kiss":

> Anton. *I feel a holy fire,*
> *That yields a comfortable heat within me;*
> *I am quite alter'd from the thing I was.*
> *See! I can stand, and go alone; thus kneel*
> *To heavenly Dorothea, touch her hand*
> *With a religious kiss.*[99]

She is a lovely companion for spiritual communication, but never a partner for physical intimacy. She is by nature a "martyr virgin", and she herself proclaims:

> Dor. . . .

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[97] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 405.
[98] Ibid., p. 406.
[99] Ibid.

Hereafter, when my story is read,
As they were present now, the hearers shall
Say this of Dorothea, with wet eye,
"She lived a virgin, and a virgin dies."[100]

*

Consistently, such a victory of mind over body is also interpreted as that of Christianity over another religion, that of Paganism, hence the value of conversion is also trumpeted in this way. Like both Chinese plays, conversion is a rite marking spiritual sublimation which strengthens the latter's aura of rationality and morality, while in terms of dramatic form, conversion is the destination of the plot, constituting a prominent milestone that gives the audience a feeling of stylistic fulfilment. At one point or another other characters are also converted during this drama, these being what one might, dramaturgically speaking, call subsidiary conversions. Conversion occurs thrice to different characters: first to Calista and Christena, secondly to Antoninus and finally to Theophilus. The first two of these conversions is related to the issue of love, but in the end grows aloof from love and turns into a struggle against heathenism.

The first conversion takes place after a detailed dispute on the nature of paganism, and this dispute once more takes the issue of sexual morality as the main topic. Only when the girls have been convinced of the promiscuous and licentious nature of paganism do they give it up for Christianity, so in this sense, it too can be viewed as a triumph of asceticism over carnality.[101] As mentioned above, the pagan temples are cursed as "brothel-house", Venus is a whore and Jupiter an adulterer and incestuous with his sister, the gods "had ample share in men's base affections; subject to unchaste loves . . .,[102] and according to Dorothea, to follow paganism means to give one's "chaste body up to the goatish lust", and to "turn strumpet" or "common whore" or "prostitute". As a result, the girls are completely converted, they no longer wishing to be "the mistress of the earth" and seek for the "worldly blessing".

Antoninus begins to doubt paganism when his affection for Dorothea is being transformed into a combination of sexual adoration and religious zeal, and realises the evil nature of paganism, and his conversion is eventually consummated when his lust for fleshy beauty are replaced by respect and admiration for a heavenly beauty. As Dorothea approaches her death, we witness the following scene:

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[100] Ibid.

[101] There is a lack of interior reason for the change in the girls' personalities, this change simply satisfying the demand of the plot of conversion. As William Hazlitt says: "All Massinger's characters act from single motives, and become what they are, and remain so, by a pure effort of the will, in spite of circumstances. This last author endeavoured to embody an abstract principle". As quoted in Martin Garrett, *Massinger: The Critical heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 142.

[102] *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 397.

Anton. . . .

See, she comes,
How sweet her innocence appears! more like
To heaven itself, than any sacrifice
That can be offer'd to it. By my hopes
Of joys hereafter, the sight makes me doubtful
In my belief; nor can I think your gods
Are good, or to be served that take delight
In offerings of this kind: that, to maintain
Their power, deface the masterpiece of nature,
Which they themselves come short of.[103]

His conversion is highly emotional, based on intuition rather than coolly rational decision. His aversion to paganism grows in direct ratio to his increasing adoration of Dorothea, and when she his idol is being blasphemed and he is suffering emotionally as he witnesses her being tortured, he instinctively realises that paganism is against him. He wishes "to go with her", which means cleaving to her through the logical compulsion of his emotions rather than following any abstract Christian doctrine, so that when Dorothea dies, he may die as well, because he has lost his "heart", his sweetheart.

The power of Christianity to convert is seen most fully in the case of Theophilus, the most zealous prosecutor of Christians. Although he has persecuted countless Christians and even killed his own daughters, yet his conscience and intuitive benevolence are stirred by the tragic scene of Dorothea's death. He repents, and willingly lets himself be tortured by the instruments he himself invented for Christians, and moreover, he even releases all the Christian prisoners in redemption for his crimes. His conversion has little to do with the theme of love, but provides a generalised picture of Christianity's assimilative power, its moral quality and its righteousness. This is eloquently argued in the following:

Theoph. . . .
. . . You would hear an embassy from heaven
By a wing'd legate; for the truth deliver'd,
Both how, and what, this blessed virgin suffer'd,
And Dorothea hereafter named,
You will rise up with reverence, . . .[104]

Theoph. *Most glorious vision! --*
Did e'er so hard a bed yield man a dream
So heavenly as this? I am confirm'd,

[103] Ibid., p. 405.
[104] Ibid., p. 409.

Confirm'd, you blessed spirits, and make haste
You offer me. Death! till this blest minute,
Hasten thee now, for any pain I suffer,
Which through this stormy way I would creep to,
And, humbly kneeling, with humility wear it.
Oh! now I feel thee: -- blessed spirits! I come;
Die a soldier in the Christian wars.[105]

Four. Paradox between Intent and Effect

The dramatist's intention and the audience's reaction do not always coincide with each other, but may even be at cross-purposes. In these plays, the obvious theological bent and lengthy ascetic preaching should in theory suffice to move and convince the audience, but nevertheless, it cannot always have been the case that such a purpose succeeded. Religion and love objectively have well-matched rival claims, and from time to time in these dramas the power and charm of religion are weakened and diminished. In the course of the struggle between rival claims, the audience may become ambivalent in its reaction to the dramatic conflict, and rather than being completely convinced by the religious message, may tend to oscillate between for and against. What is more, involved in the dramatic conflict, they may even come to be at odds with religion, averse to its didactic preaching, and shift their standpoint towards anti-religious humanism, feeling sympathetic to love. In such circumstances, the religious play becomes in spite of its playwright's intent, a critique of religion, or at least an ironical cocking of a snook at religion, and this conflict between intent and effect most probably reflects an actual *Seelenzwist*, a battle however imbalanced within the playwright's own internal world.

This internal contradiction within the playwrights of these plays is seen in the vitality of the humanism that comes over to the reader or audience willy-nilly. Although theological propaganda dominates in the dramas and eventually wins the battle on the structural and thematic planes, the obverse, the secular side, still exhibits a remarkable latent vigour and tenacity. Pushing against the overwhelming theological current is the objective logicality of the incidents, which have their own independent life-force and enough of it to sometimes resist the motive power of religious ardour and theological suasion. Although love and humanity are eventually tamed by asceticism, this outcome reveals itself as a victory of artificiality over Nature, of authority over reason. So to the end suppressed humanity still protests against religious oppression, and the condemned profanity and carnality which override natural inclination, instinctive needs, sexual desire and so on, may still arouse sympathy.

[105] Ibid., p. 410.

This all goes to say that humanism is not a purely passive victim in these plays. Its vigour may suffice to resist the constant theological aggressions with partial success and to survive them, and, given the known general composition of theatre audiences through the ages, it may well hold more ready charms for the audience and easily provoke a warm echo. For instance, love, sex, family happiness, desires for wealth, hedonistic life styles and so on may well appeal to such audiences intuitively much more than does didactic religious doctrine, simply because they are much closer to the audience's experiences and also closer to the ordinary actualities of life, making more easily identifiable coherent sense, if only for their greater concreteness and conceptual graspability.

While the opposing ethical forces are struggling, the audience may be easily carried away by the attractions of carnality and profanity, leaving the religion theme aside, or trailing behind. This point can be illustrated by numerous textual examples. For instance, in *Character for "Forbearance"*, family life and natural happiness as delineated in the prologue is by most standards fairly attractive: Liu Junzuo, as the richest man in the town, has a family with three other members, his wife, son and daughter. This is quite an ideally felicitous situation from a secular point of view, the material plenty and the joys of kin, and the hero would surely be viewed by the audiences of most eras in any country as someone who should be an at least fairly contented man. This initial scene is full of humanistic atmosphere and alludes to various of the pleasures of ordinary non-religious life. While outside large snowflakes are flying, indoors domestic warmth prevails. Against such a backdrop comes a philosophical conversation about life:

> LIU JUNZUO. . . . Now it is winter time, auspicious snow is flying outside, and the rich people are drinking and enjoying the snow by their red-hot stoves in their warm towers. What a pleasure! However, I can't do the same. Why? Because I am afraid that my fortune will be wasted.
>
> WIFE. . . . Darling, the saying goes, "It is high time to drink when it's snowing". Although you are right, what does it matter to drink a few cups!
>
> LIU JUNZUO. My dear, it is not nice to disobey you, but it will cost me something to obey you. Well, well, I'll heed your advice then.
>
> CHILDREN. Father, does it matter, having a few cups?[106]

From the context emerges an outlook in favour of hedonism summed up in the maxim "make merry while one still may" (*jishi xingle*). Later Junzuo assents and asks his attendant to buy wine, then drinks with his wife. The vivid scene illustrates attractive facets of secular life.

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[106] *Ren-zi ji*, op. cit., p. 1059.

This non-religious attitude is further developed in Act One by the scene of the birthday party for the hero. The atmosphere is lively and jolly, and the feast sumptuous:

> LIU JUNZUO.
> *The cups and goblets cross one another,*
> *Now I see*
> *The door curtains dancing lightly with the east wind;*
> *Now I hear*
> *The loud music and drums noising to the sky,*
> *And the reed-mouthorgans and vertical flutes sounding clamorous.*
> LIU JUNYOU. Brother, finish this cup!
> LIU JUNZUO. Brother, it is really nice wine!
> *The jade cups shine with their brimming charms,*
> *The vernal wine is mellow,*
> *The smoke is rising in spirals from the golden burner*
> *Where the longevity incense is burning.*[107]

These scenes exhibit the attractions and great powers of temptation of worldly life. The situation is similar in *Crazy Ren*. It too has a sumptuous party for the hero's birthday, which coincides with the date when his baby is a month old. His friends and neighbours come with presents, and then the feast starts. This play's difference from *Character for "Forbearance"* here lies solely in its describing the profane atmosphere and merry-making much more vividly and in even greater detail and with yet more enthusiastic strokes, witness the following extract:

> CRAZY REN. Brothers, the more times we meet, the more years we have aged. How many more years have we left for our brotherhood!
> . . .
> *A butcher, I hold a feast,*
> *There are mountains of meat and rivers of liquor.*
> *We are all colleagues of equal position,*
> *We are all "brothers" of the same generation,*
> *We drink till the moon comes above the blossomed twigs and no wine is left.*
> *The wind is blowing the lotus leaves and their blossom falling,*
> *Guests are talking clamorously,*
> *Wine has been presented,*
> *No one stands on ceremony being polite,*
> *One cup after another,*
> *All of them are emptied.*[108]

Here we feel the energy of mundane human life and the assimilative power of the mundane mentality. Even if the ascetic life is elsewhere described with ardent religious

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[107] Ibid., p. 1062.
[108] *Ren Feng-zi*, op. cit., p. 1671.

zeal, awareness of the attractions of irreligious life is neither overridden nor sidelined. For example, in both Chinese works, as we have seen, the reclusive environment of monks is also one that would very much appeal to laymen, being pervaded by tranquillity and calm, attributes that can be also wholly attractive to secular folks.[109] This situation bears resemblances with that in Indian or Greek mythology where deities are cast in the image of human beings and the immortals' surroundings are a transformation of the profane world. On a similar point W. Dolby remarks:

> Supernatural beings appeared in these and other plays, but in only relatively few were ghosts, spirits demons, or magic central to the theme. This paucity may be explained by the Chinese custom of regarding supernatural worlds and beings as much nearer to the normal human world in nature.[110]

*

Love also obstinately manifests itself. Struggling against the religious morality of abstinence, it displays a great deal of vitality. In *Character for "Forbearance"*, even after his conversion, the hero's sexual desires still burst forth from time to time, breaking all his bonds of forbearance and signalling the revival of his suppressed worldly virility.

The first sexual outburst is very deliberately presented in considerable detail, in Act Two, when Junzuo is told about his wife's affair with his sworn brother and hurries home in jealousy and wrath in order to catch the adulterous pair red-handed and eventually attempts to kill them. In this context, jealousy is a negative measurement of the strength of his sexual desire. The second sexual outburst occurs after he has been listening to an incredibly lengthy sermon on forbearance, during which he has failed to disengage himself from secular aspirations to material wealth and hankerings after his "flower-like wife". On being once again instructed to forbear from all profane desires, he cries: "Master, I can not forbear! I am missing my wife, and worrying about her!"[111] Such a terse exclamation sharply contrasts to the lengthy preaching, the contrast exercising an ironic function. His breaking forth into sexuality anew takes place after this, in a dream that he has, which is sent him, to prove their religious message, by the monks. In it, his wife comes to see him, thus providing the excuse for a touching scene of love's tenderness:

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[109] "Hermit" in the Chinese sense joins the religious and secular personalities, and a person in which such are joined stands between monk and layman. In actual practice, the distinction between them is often very vague, this vaguery corresponding to Chinese religious attitudes in general which are largely adulterated by secular elements.

[110] W. Dolby, "Yuan Drama", in Colin Mackerras (ed.), *Chinese Theatre: From its origin to the present day*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p. 43.

[111] *Ren-zi ji*, op. cit., p. 1073.

LIU JUNZUO. Darling, how I have been longing for you!
I cannot help feeling so much emotion,
Nor can I help feeling even sadder,
Ours should be perfect marriage,
But what can be done about this yokel monk?
WIFE. Why should you fear him?
LIU JUNZUO. Darling, you don't understand! --
He is brandishing the bar to beat love-birds apart,
He would not blow the jade flute to attract phoenixes together.
WIFE. Darling, how miserable I am because of you!
LIU JUNZUO.
I am wondering when this misery will ever end,
I am thinking of your affection every day.
(He prints the character for "forbearance" on her hand.)
WIFE. Look, the character for "forbearance" is printed on my hand!
LIU JUNZUO.
I am brooding,
As if the edge of a knife is placed upon my heart.[112]

His final sexual outburst surges to its climax in the scene when, surprised to (apparently) discover that even the senior monks may have wives, he abandons the religion in disgust and leaves for home in order to take up his previous carnal life once more. Although he subsequently comes back to the religion, that does not mean that the morality of sexual abstinence has won the day, since the real reason for his return to religion is that he has been shocked to find that the social dispositions and human relationships of the mundane world that he knew of old have now been radically altered: His grandson even being much senior to him in age, his niece is old enough to be his mother and his great-grandchild is his "brother", as he puts it, or a man apparently of his own generation, this also allowing us to understand that his wife has long since died and his former marriage and position in the social hierarchy have long since ceased to exist. He is recognised by nobody, so his only option is to return to religion. On the one hand, this is a victory of religion, but on the other, it is a matter of regret for the character in the play, and would doubtless invoke the audience's sympathy as well. It is somewhat of an exception to the Chinese dramaturgical convention of ending plays with a perfected rounding-off, and instead leaves a faint strand of sadness. This shows the strength of the humanistic nuances in the play.

In *Crazy Ren* the emotional dilemma is treated in a much simpler way. The converted butcher adheres to religion so resolutely that he beats his wife, writes her a divorce paper and even kills his child. But paradoxically, his zeal and resolution have gone to the lengths of, what by ordinary mundane standards, is absurdity and perversion,

[112] Ibid., p. 1074.

so that those scenes in fact turn ironical and the character ridiculous by such standards. His ruthless action can hardly have been acceptable to the audience, and therefore would surely, to a great extent, have aroused its aversion to the religious morality motivating or fuelling the acts. This religious extremism has the feel of a literal *reductio ad absurdum.*[113]

The contradiction also appears in the hero's use of terms in *Crazy Ren.* For example, his references to wine or alcohol embody clear semantic contradictions. One of his lines goes: "**I neither drink wine** nor have sex"[114], but a few lines before this, he has declared: "The paths are covered by flowers and **my pot is full of wine**"[115]. It is difficult to identify whether this is a casual mistake or deliberately created paradox, but in either case it betrays the persistence of the author's secular subconscious even in a basically religiously motivated piece of literature, and reflects an ideological ambivalence.

Although both Chinese plays demand that the audience accept the idea of transmigration (*lunhui*), the protagonists all the same still reserve their free will in the dramatic sense and act of their own accord, and the course of the dramatic incidents depends on the reason and logic of reality, which means that the fatalistic atmosphere is at times diluted. This is a faithful reflection of the general Chinese outlook which emphasises personal responsibility rather than the more abstract concept of fate. In this connection, John Ross argues:

> There is no trace in the classics of the doctrine of fatalism. They contain no word corresponding to the meaning of "fate". The notions implied in *Kharma* are, however, involved in the Chinese term. We do not find man represented anywhere as exposed to an unavoidable and uncertain destiny. . . . Fatalism in all shades of its meaning is unknown in Chinese classical philosophy. Yet the outcome of life for every man is fixed. "As a man soweth so shall he also reap," is the key by which the Chinese try to unlock all the mysterious happenings to man. It is all implied in the aphorism of Confucius, "Birth and death are by decree, wealth and honour are at the disposal of Heaven." But, as will appear from the quotations below, this decree is in no way arbitrary.[116]

W. E. Soothill tries to exclude fate from Buddhism:

> Karma does not mean Fate in our sense of the word. It means the sum-total of the deeds done in previous existences, in other words the resultant of the forces brought into

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[113] Unlike Ma Zhiyuan, Massinger depicts his villain, rather than his hero, in a similar way: Theophilus killed his two daughters simply for the sake of religion; cf. *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 399.

[114] My emboldening; *Ren-zi ji*, op. cit., p. 1074, line 7.

[115] My emboldening, *Ren Feng-zi*, op. cit., p. 1676, line 4.

[116] *The Original Religion of China* (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, n.d. [c. 1910]), p. 107.

> action, for there seems to be one permanent fact in Buddhism, and that is the law of cause and effect.[117]

The Daoist concept of tranquillity is also far from passive and pessimistic fatalism, and the purport of the Daoist *wuwei* ("doing nothing") lies in relying on boundless cosmic wisdom rather than limited individual efforts.

The situation has similarities in *The Virgin-Martyr*, where fleshly desire is never entirely extinguished, but where, on the contrary, the ascetic suppression provides a chance for it to demonstrate its force and tenacity. Instead of being eliminated it is transformed into an ambiguous quality which would provoke ambivalent reactions in an audience. That is to say, most of Antoninus' fiery emotions as described in the play can be comprehended either as religious zeal or sexual passion or a mixture of both. On the other hand, the passion and desire flowing from Artemia to Antoninus would greatly appeal to the audience, even though condemned in the play for its profanity. Similarly, Antoninus' worldly aspirations for Dorothea provide the most exciting and disturbing moment of the play. As in *Character for "Forbearance"*, when the two of them both leave the human world to enter into the airy realm without any physical embrace, they leave the possibility of boundless regret and sadness on the part of the audience, even though the situation is formally supposed to be a more than satisfactory one evoking contentment. From one point of view the ending could easily be seen as tragic, in spite of the apparently intended exclusion of such reactions by the couple's subsequent metaphysical union and spiritual perfection.

All the same, the humanistic mood transmitted by paganism persists, and it is quite ironical that even the Virgin-Martyr, who is featured with linguistic purity and holiness, could not help share the pagan parlance.[118] Paganism with its concomitant humanism forms a very powerful aspect of the work, the references to various love stories of ancient mythology strongly evoking one of the most important facets of human life -- intra-sexual love. This accords with the Biblical statement on the same matter, that, "indeed, the language used to describe the relationship of virgins with Christ is replete with sexual symbolism."[119] This reminds us of the nature of the play *The Virgin-Martyr*: it is not a genuine religious play, but a play about religion. Although creating a story of conversion, the dramatist is offering a moralistic revelation (this point being clarified

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[117] W. E. Soothill, *Three Religions of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 97.

[118] For instance: ". . . bury in/ Oblivion your feign'd Hesperian orchards:--/ The golden fruit, kept by the watchful dragon,/ **Which did require a Hercules to get it.**/. . . The power I serve,/ Laughs at your happy Araby, or the/ Elysian shades". Emboldenings mine; *The Virgin-Martyr*, op. cit., p. 405.

[119] Bernard I. Murstein, "The Wonders of Virginity", in his *Love, Sex, and Marriage through the Ages* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), p. 95.

when his other plays are invited as referents[120]), and yet on the other hand, the play still falls outside the category of Medieval morality plays, because its religious events act as means to an end. As John S. Keltie says: "The chief merits of Massinger's plays are their unusual earnestness and religiousness of tone, the power of deep reflection, and of **depicting with a master hand the tenderer human emotions** which they display".[121] And although conversion eventually gains ascendance over love, yet it also leaves endless pity to, and arouses profound resentment from, the audience. In this sense, love's value accrues. As Freud puts it:

> An obstacle is required in order to heighten libido; . . . In this connection it may be claimed that the ascetic current in Christianity created psychical values for love which pagan antiquity was never able to confer on it. [122]

The strength of an anti-religious undercurrent can also be perceived in respect of style. For instance, both Chinese plays are often comical, if not quite comedies, and *The Virgin-Martyr* contains farcical and absurd elements as well, especially where love and sex are concerned, the drunkard and the whoremonger both being farcical roles, and lewd and bawdy diction featuring prominently in their dialogues. Such lighter touches would function to release the audience' psychological tension between love and abstinence, humour having a general capacity for freeing people from the oppressions and depressions of ascetic strictures, and irony and ridicule being a kind of irreverence, even blasphemy, that counters or even destroys religious solemnity or dilutes sacred atmospheres. With a sense of humour, audience recovers a sense of love. But nevertheless, despite the light touches and its bright epilogue, *The Virgin Martyr* ends in tragic mode, while both Chinese plays round off on a harmonious note.

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[120] The following commentary on Massinger in general is perfectly applicable to this particular play: "In Massinger's plays the conflict between lust and chastity is a frequent theme, though by no means in the same degrees as in other of our Elisabethan [sic.] dramatists. Fortitude inspired by religious concoctions: endurance steeled by the consciousness of a righteous cause; tyranny punished by its own excess; self-control rising superior to the command of irresistible authority; woman's readiness for self-sacrifice as reconcilable with her purity, man's victorious endeavour to resist the potent influence of passion -- such are among the motive agencies which he represents as moral forces determining the course of life." Adolphus William Ward, *A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne* (London: [n.p.], 1875); as quoted in Martin Garrett, *Massinger: The critical heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 184.

[121] "Philip Massinger", in *The English Dramatists*, John S. Keltie & F. S. A. Scot (eds.) (Edinburgh: W. P. Mimmo, Hay & Mitchell, 1894), p. 383; emboldenings mine.

[122] Freud, "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), pp. 187-8.

Such difference reflects the different attitudes to religion and the different position of religions in the West and China. China throughout the whole course of its history has basically been governed more by humanism than by divinity. By comparison with Europe or other regions of the world, even such oriental countries as India, religion has never achieved the same degree of dominance in China's social ideology. The prevailing and ruling Confucianism was practised religiously, but Confucianism is not religion being instead a rationalistic, human-based doctrine, and it is perhaps true that "even in dynastic times most Chinese were not the followers of Confucius that the small educated minority purported to be."[123] Daoism in the course of its later developments became a mixture of religious ingredients, shamanism and superstition. As for Buddhism, although seen by some as atheist in origin, it was, by the time it reached China, a full-blown religion; and as an import it was soon sinolised and secularised, as David W. Chappell remarks:

> After entering China, Buddhism intermingled with the needs and expectations of people in society before it could develop its own self-sufficiency to rise to its greatest height in the four major Buddhist schools. Religion and society, church and state, were never separate in China. [124]

Furthermore, it never, partly owing to its abstruseness, influenced Chinese secular life to the same extent as did Christianity in the West,[125] and, like Daoism, its activities were largely limited to certain professional spheres and functions, never gaining the same widespread permeation as did Christianity in Europe, its practice among the ordinary populace even being somewhat secular in mood and style. [126] It is also worth noting that,

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[123] W. J. F., Jenner, "Family Circles", in his *The Tyranny of History: The root of China's crisis* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 111.

[124] David W. Chappell, "Introduction", in his *Buddhism and Taoism Practice in Medieval Chinese Society: Buddhist and Taoist Studies II* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), p. 1.

[125] The idea of the trinity of religions (*san-jiao yi-zhi*) is also reflected in both Buddhist works such as *Jing-qing fa-xing jing*, and Daoist canons such as *Dechongfu* by Zhuangzi. The former has it that the Buddha sent three disciples to China, they being Confucius, Yan Yuan, and Laozi, whereas the latter holds that Confucius was taught by Laozi, and Laozi later went west and taught the Buddha. From this the position of Buddhism in China is clearly seen. Ren Jiyu says: "The two different versions of the trinity of religions in China reflect the violent struggle between Buddhism and Daoism, and also the extended rivalry between them: Neither could devour the other, so each tried to show itself as superior to the other." *Zhongguo fujiao shi*, vol. 3 (Peking: Zhongguo Shehuikexue Chubanshe, 1988), p. 25; and in the period of South-and-North dynasty, "the idea of the trinity generally prevailed." Ren, op. cit. p. 94.

[126] Despite the nature of the religious marrow of Daoism and Buddhism, for most of the Chinese populace the former is a magical creed and the latter admixed with superstition, so that temples of both creeds never function as intensely socially as does the church building in the West. Cf. Emile Durkhein: "It is quite another matter with magic. . . . It does not result in binding together those who adhere to it, nor in uniting them into a group leading a common life. *There is no church of magic.* . . . It is to be remarked that these associations [of the magic] are in no way indispensable to the working of the magic; they are even rare and rather exceptional. The magician has no need of uniting himself to his fellows to practise his art. More frequently, he is a recluse; in general, far from seeking society, he flees it". "Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion", in his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious*

in China there has been no secure established religious organisation like the Western ones:

> This is certainly so in the case of Confucianism, and although Buddhism and Daoism have temples and form sects, yet, the relationship among the believers [of different religions] is incomparable with that among the churches in the West. Various ideas from the sects of the three religions circulate freely in societ. There is no way to determine the particular elements of a systematised outlook of the Chinese in general. In traditional China, all educated people read Confucius, Mencius, Cheng's brothers and Zhu Xi; nevertheless, we could never pin down what moral conceptions have exerted the particular influence on a reader, or if any influence at all.[127]

Max Weber is also conscious of this:

> Confucius and Lao-tzu, or at least their successors, nevertheless shared the belief in spirits and the whole official Pantheon, whereas the *Tao Teh Ching* [*Dao-de jing*] was apparently largely free of magic. An educated Chinese, oriented to practical politics could not reject all this. The ideas of the supra-mundane, personal god, who was creator and ruler of this world, who held sway over all creatures as he saw fit and before whom all creature were unsanctified, could be consummated neither by chanced education, nor in the main.[128]

Religion is conceived pluralistically in China, and it embraces an abundance of secular elements,[129] being in this respect similar to primeval paganism, whilst in Europe,

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Life, translated from the French by Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), pp. 44-5; and W. J. F. Jenner says: "There is no prospect of religion uniting all the Han Chinese, let alone the whole Chinese empire." See his "God, Ghost and *Gemenr*", in his *The Tyranny of History: The root of China's crisis* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 194.

[127] Yu Shiying, *Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao-lunli yu shangren-jingshen* (Taipei: Lianjing Shiye Chuban Gongsi, 1987), p. 72. More correctly speaking, educated Chinese read not only the foregoing, but also Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Buddhism as well, mainly not from the religious point of view, but for the sake of the works' general informativeness.

[128] "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy", in his *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, translated by Hans H. Gerth (The Free Press, 1951), pp. 185-6.

[129] Chinese religion as a whole is inclined toward the Trinity of Religions (*Sanjiao heyi*), which blends Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Buddhism *per se* is antagonistic toward the abundant secular elements in prior traditional Chinese thinking, and found its way to China in the times of Wei-Jin when the vogue for the ideas of "opting out of worldly society (*chushi*)" and "metaphysical talk (*qingtan*)", as opposed to practicality prevailed; but this out-of-society tendency veered towards entering-society beliefs and activities, and the creed was gradually secularised by the Tang dynasty, when Huineng, continuing in this same direction, launched the New Zen movement. This situation in many respects reminds one of the creed's assimilation with Confucianism, which centres on humanism and opposes the supernatural, Confucius being said to have refused to discuss the weird and divine, etc., and "When we don't yet understand life, how can we understand death?" (*Bu-yu guai li luan shen*, and *Wei zhi sheng, an zhi si?*, etc.), and the general idea of "the other world" (*bishi*). The authentic Confucianists such as Han Yu were actually affected by Buddhism, as seen in Han Yu's *Daotong* for instance. Taoism has been particularly open to Buddhism, and has absorbed Confucianism since the Han dynasty, folk Daoism (*minjian daojiao*) also being blended with Chinese folklore and mythology and middle-brow literature, these latter as, for example, in the absorption of the legends of Guan Yu and the Eight Immortals (*Baxian*) into temple iconography and scriptural writings.

Christian ideology is fundamentally opposed to the secular.[130] Hence the difference of dénouements between the Chinese plots on the one hand and the English one on the other, with the different solutions for the similar conflicts.

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All these three plays have a subjective religious aim, but nevertheless the other side of the coin should not be overlooked: the plays also must have had other-than-religious objective effects. Although the playwrights' religious tendencies take precedence, yet the claims of ordinary reality are not overcome by what many would view as their subjective attitudes. At the same time as religious ethical principles are being extolled, the objective logic of ordinary human life and mundane emotion is, ineluctably, being allowed a considerable amount of respect by, among other things, the very forcefulness with which that life and emotion are described. Thus the authors do not entirely replace truthful description of ordinary human realities by their own religious intentions, and it is for this reason that their works often lapse into internal contradiction leaving an apparent dilemma.

Despite this, it would be very wrong to consider such situations as flaws in the works. On the contrary, it is in them that lie the true artistic force and ideological zest of the plays, and they are that which elevates the plays as drama and literature above the purely didactic religious morality play. In these works, the movement of the plot is subject to opposed impetuses, those of the vitality of Eros and of Divine authority, and it often appears that the former is endowed with vigour by Nature, while the latter is feeble and lame with artificiality and labour. Sometimes the plot nearly leads itself out of the confines of the basic religious intention, but the author, doing it a certain violence, chooses arbitrarily to wrench it back onto the religious track. Take *Character for "Forbearance"*, for instance. The author contrives such a difficult social environment for the hero that he is forced to return to religion. In *The Virgin-Martyr* when Antoninus' aspiration for love becomes too powerful to be suppressed, it is turned into an ambiguous alloy.

While no one can deny that these are religious plays as a whole, they can readily be viewed from an alternative perspective that permits one to detect their latent secular import, to see the positive meaning still shining through the negative hypothesis. There

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[130] This situation lasted till the Protestant Reformation which, according to Max Weber, promoted "innerwordly asceticism" and provided an ethical foundation for early capitalism and industrial society. Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976).

are unexpected consequences. For instance, when sexual love is defined as "emptiness" or "void", it can actually gain in appeal, become more easily excusable or acceptable, because in that case, people do not take it so seriously as to regard it as taboo, sex is then released from the stigma of substantiality and people are liberated from prohibitions and inhibitions. On the other hand, when life is devalued as fleeting and limited, as opposed to eternal and boundless, the devaluation may actually incite one to value it more because of its sheer brevity and for hedonistic reasons of wishing to pack it with as much pleasure as possible before time snatches it away. Thematic profundity, complexity of characterisation and even structural excitement are all embellished by the life-like tensions and extra intricacies of these apparent paradoxes. It is remarkable to what extent both the Chinese and the English plays under discussion utilise the liberal exposition of this attitudinal conflict to heighten the impact of their dramas, and it is in no small measure by their doing so that these works are rendered dramatic masterpieces. It is in religion, with its demands which have the extra strength of claiming to be supernaturally sanctioned, for the abandonment of the self and of individuality, that sexual love often finds its sternest foe, while the freedom and intense individuality of romantic love are actively or passively the greatest of challenges to the self-effacements required by religion. The combat between religion and love sharpens the delineation of both, and these plays are of the type which surely, East and West, puts the issues concerned most plainly and most stimulatingly.

CHAPTER III: Imperial and Royal Love

Part One. Thematic Aspects

1

Similarities between classical Chinese drama and Sanskrit drama have been emphasised to such an extent that some scholars firmly believe that Chinese drama emerged under the direct influence of Sanskrit drama, and furthermore that Chinese drama in its initial phase was simply a variation of the latter. It is clear that such an argument depends more on circumstantial indications plus some largely imaginative conjecture than on empirical proofs, and it is no longer popular with Chinese scholars for various reasons, sometimes for instance, because it runs up against would-be patriotic sentiments that wish to stress the independent cultural achievements of the Chinese nation, but also because of the scantiness of solid direct evidence for the argument, which is as principally conjectural as the thesis that Sanskrit drama itself emerged directly and chiefly as the result of Hellenic influence.[1]

These doubts notwithstanding, even were this suggestion of origin entirely disprovable, it has made an undoubted contribution to Chinese drama studies by its very inspiration of thinking along intra-cultural lines and its stimulating the comparative study of Chinese and Sanskrit dramas, encouraging a useful exploration of both differences and rapports between them. Although one may be unconvinced by the hypothesis that the main origin of Chinese drama lies in India, it is vital to push forward with the work of comparison, and here, by analysing two highly representative dramas about imperial and royal love from two of the East's most prominent civilisations: *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shankuntala* the effort is undertaken to increase our understanding both of specific intra-cultural traits and of wider dramaturgical principles.

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[1] Cf. M. Winternitz, "Early History of Drama", in his *History of Indian Literature: Classical Sanskrit literature*, translated from the German with additions by Subhadra Jha (Delhi, Patna, Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963), vol. iii, part i, pp. 193-7.

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Imperial or royal love is a motif shared by both oriental and occidental drama, not equally, however, since the oriental theatre unmistakably predominates in the quantity and status of its pieces on the theme. Even in the East, however, different cultures show marked variations in this matter, such plays being significantly more prestigious and frequent in China than in Japan, but there is an intriguing parallel to China in the salience of royal love dramas in the Sanskrit theatre of India.

Royal love as a dramatic theme has also existed in the West as early as the advent of drama there, but did not reach the full relative growth and impact of its counterparts in China and India. In ancient Greek drama, works concerned with royal love are not rare, none of the three major tragic playwrights omitting this subject matter, for example, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Phaidra*, and Euripides' *Andromache*, *Helen*, *Hippolytos*, and *Alcestis*, but nevertheless, very few works, if any, probe the potential depths of it, even where it occupies a large part of a work, which is perhaps why no play of ancient Greece is particularly renowned for the theme of royal love in itself. The Roman dramatist Ennius wrote *Andromache*, then Seneca wrote *Dido*, a drama about the romantic entanglement between the legendary Queen Dido and Aeneas, and *Andromache* as well; and in much later ages Europe produced such plays as *Alexander and Campaspe* by John Lilly, *Antony and Cleopatra* by Shakespear and *Phèdre* by Racine, but the cultural status of this motif still did not advance to the centrality which it enjoyed in the East.

In China and India, the theme was grasped with enthusiasm by playwrights. As Greek drama declined, so Indian drama flowered, and with it this theme, and after Sanskrit drama had passed its heyday, Chinese drama emerged and in its turn chronologically succeeded to the motif. The period from the flourishing of Sanskrit drama in India to that of Yuan drama in China corresponded to a low water in European dramatic literature, and from the Yuan onwards the use of the imperial love topic was burgeoning along with the steady evolution of Chinese theatre, so that by the time *Alexander and Campaspe* or *Antony and Cleopatra* came into being, Chinese drama had already stridden into a new phase of the theme's development and in so doing given it new artistic legitimacy.

Sanskrit drama is likewise rich in this theme, all the three plays credited to Kalidasa employing it. *Malavika and Agnimitra* deals with the romantic entanglement between King Agnimitra and Malavika, a court maid; *Vikram and Urvashi* narrates affairs between King Pururavas and Urvashi, a nymph. The third one, *Shakuntala,* has gained world-wide acclaim and will be a major focus of the studies below.

In China, the individual topics of imperial love as pre-dramatic subject-matter seem rather limited in range, but the theatre made good use of the limited source materials by repeated use that entailed constant variation, a process which aimed at ever fuller realisation of the themes' potential and continual renewal of their cultural significance.[2] Instead of epics or mythology, as one might expect from a glance at certain other cultures, Chinese drama on the theme of imperial love drew its basic material or inspiration from historical and semi-historical accounts, saliently from such as the part-historical part-legendary romantic stories of Emperor Minghuang (Xuanzong, r. 712-756), and his consort Lady Yang, or the important but less prominent, likewise part-historical part-legendary story of the love affair between a court lady Wang Zhaojun and Emperor Yuandi (r. 48 BC-33 BC).[3] Regarding the former, we are told "for a thousand

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[2] According to the available records, there have been many other famous plays based on the same subject matter, such as the following:

The Yuan Dynasty:

1). *Weeping over the Perfume-sachet* (*Tang Minghuang qi qie ku xiangnang*), by Guan Hanqing;

2). *Rain on the Paulownia* (*Tang Minghuang qiuye wutong yu*), by Bai Pu;

3). *Visiting the Moon Palace* (*Tang Minghuang you yuegong*), by Bai Pu;

4). *Lady Yang's Regrets on "Rainbow Garment"* (*"Nishang" yuan*), by Yu Tianxi;

5). *Lady Yang Out of the Bath in the Palace of Floral Purity* (*Yang Taizhen yu-ba Huaqing-gong*), by Yu Tianxi;

6). *Gauze Shining Distant and Lady Yang's Dream Breaking* (*Luoguang yuan mengduan Yang Fei*), by Yue Bochuan;

7). *Niannu Teaching the Music Treasury Song* (*Nianhu jiao yuefu*), by Li Zhifu.

The Ming Dynasty;

8). *Emperor at the Palace of Eternal Life on the Double Seventh* (*Tang Minghuang qixi Changsheng-dian*), by Wang Daodun;

9). *Rain Beating the Paulownia* (*Wutong yu*), by Xu Fuzuo;

10). *Trial of Chen Xuanli at the Temple of Love Birds in the Netherworld* (*Yuanyang-si ming-kan Chen Xuanli*), by Ye Xianzu;

11). *Imperial Concubine's Spring Outing in the Auspicious Garden* (*Xingshang-yuan difei youchun*), by Cheng Shilian;

12). *Rain Beating the Paulownia* (*Wutong yu*), by Wang Xiang;

13). *Fabulous Nuptial Tie with the Jade Box* (*Dianhe qiyuan*), by Fu Yichen,

14). *Rain Beating the Paulownia in the Autumnal Night* (*Qiuye wutong yu*, anonymous);

15). *Emperor Looking afar at the Capital* (*Minghuang wang Changan*, anonymous);

16). *Dancing in the Jade Dish* (*Wu cuipan*, anonymous);

17). *A Story of Colourful Hairs of Her Writting-brush* (*Caihao-ji*), by Tu Long;

19). *Eaglewood Pavilion* (*Chenxiang-ting*, anonymous);

20). *A Story of the United Hair Pins* (*He-chai-ji*), by Wu Qiurui.The Qing Dynasty:21). *Peaceful Tune* (*Qingpingdiao*), by You Tong;

22). *Musical History of the Time of Heavenly Treasure* (*Tianbao qu-shi*), by Sun Yu;

23). *Palace of Eternal Life* (*Changsheng-dian*), by Hong Sheng.

The Republic of China:

24). *The Death of Lady Yang* (*Yang Guifei-zhi-si*), by Wang Duqing (1927).

[3] Because in this source material righteousness, duty and patriotism take precedence over emotion, feeling and eroticism. That is why this core subject matter was easily twisted by Guo Moruo into his play *Wang Zhaojun*, which proclaims the failure of love.

years this love story captured the imagination of poets, story-tellers and dramatists, who used it over and over again in their works until it became one of the most popular historical romances in China."[4] Prior to the advent of Chinese drama, the Minghuang and Lady Yang literary motif had displayed its latent significance in such works as the Tang dynasty novella *Story of Eternal Regret* (*Changhen-ge zhuan*) by Chen Hong (fl. c. 813), *Song of Eternal Regret* (*Chang-hen ge*) by Bai Juyi (772-846), and a tale called *Unofficial Biography of Supereme-Truth Yang* (*Yang Tai-zhen wai-zhuan*) by Yue Shi (930-1007), but because of the lack of any fully matured, complex, multi-faceted, large-scale entertainment or literary medium, the exploration of the theme's cultural possibilities was for a long time limited. Of these works, Bai Juyi's in particular stands out as a milestone, but nevertheless, even though his poem pointed out the way to powerful narrative exploitation of this romance, the form of Classical Chinese *shi*-poetry was still not structurally or conventionally capacious enough for the profound content and intricate elaborations proffered by this motif of imperial love, although Bai's poem already augmented the basic material in the direction of poetic narrative and epic.[5]

In the Yuan dynasty (1234/1280-1368), this motif came further into prominence with the Yuan Variety Play (Yuan *zaju*) *Rain on the Paulownia* (*Wu-tong yu*) by Bai Pu (1226-post-300?), which is indisputably adjudged a classical work of the highest degree. Since then this story has been utilised by a continuous succession of plays with variations on the theme.[6] Similarly, the Wang Zhaojun source was used as the subject matter for *Autumn in the Han Palace (Han-gong qiu)* by Ma Zhiyuan (13th century), an equally famous Yuan playwright[7]. The variations on the Minghuang and Lady Yang theme progressed until it was given its fullest and richest development in the play now under

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[4] Tu Pien-pu, "*The Palace of Eternal Youth* and its Author", in *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, translated by Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1955), p. 313.

[5] As treatments have elaborated and gone more deeply into the topic, it has developed into a motif requiring a larger and larger scale of literary vehicle. It started with historical accounts, tales and poetry, later attained dramatic form, and in mainland China of the present day the dramatic form has given a way to television film with strong ideological messages. The Yuan dynasty also witnessed the epic-like chantfable, *The Chant-fable about Liu Zhiyuan* (*Liu Zhiyuan zhonggong diao*).

[6] It is possible that this motif gained a dramatic form in the period of antagonism between the Song and Jin; cf. Xu Shuofang's foreword in *Changsheng-dian* (Peking: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1980), pp. 8-9.

[7] According with its source material, this play is a triumph of duty and rationality over love and emotion. In this regard, Liu Jung-en says: "The only thing which has continued to puzzle people over the ages is that when the emperor hears of the death of Wang Ch'iang he shows not a shred of emotion for his beloved. This is singular; it has a false ring. Some again (this has come to be an awful obsession with the super-patriots) have read into the play the playwright's attack on those Chinese who surrendered themselves to the Mongols as a woman to a man, and did not have the courage of Wang Ch'iang to choose death rather than be the queen of a foreign king." The introduction to *Six Yüan Plays*, translated with an introduction by Liu Jung-en (Penguin Classics, 1972), pp. 33-4.

discussion, *Palace of Eternal Life* (*Changsheng-dian*) by Hong Sheng (1645-1704),[8] "one of the greatest lyric drama of China" which "is still widely read and chanted, and after the lapse of two and half centuries has lost none of its charm."[9] Jiao Xun (1763-1820) points out in respect of this drama that Hong "combines the Tang legends and lines from poets Li, Du, Bai, Wen and Li, choosing the colourful and beautiful parts from them to add zest to his work."[10] This literary trend has continued even into modern times, when drama, television drama and film still explore the theme's potential and seek to instill it with new life, novelty and contemporary significance. *Autumn in the Han Palace* on the other hand has hitherto not proven as widely inspiring, possibly because the love in it is only a secondary theme, and by and large plays something of a negative role,[11] so it could even be seen as a famous example which concerned "high politics or war"[12]. Furthermore, around the late Ming and early Qing, this motif of "imperial love" had evidently matured in a striking manner, as is witnessed by huge-scale dramas such as *Washing Silk* (*Huansha ji*) by Liang Chenyu (fl. ca. 1551), *Spring on Plum Blossom Range* (*Meiling chun*) by Wu Weiye (1609-1671), and so on.[13] Even nowadays, this motif is being elaborated yet more extensively, is viewed in yet more complex perspectives, and has ventured forth from the theatre into works of the cinema which offer it new scope and capacity.

Thus the development of the Minghuang and Lady Yang motif in drama was undertaken with the most marked success by Bai Pu and Hong Sheng, and in spite of the considerable chronological historical span from the 13th to the 17th centuries, the heritage Hong derived from Bai Pu is remarkably in evidence. Regarding this, Xu

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[8] Concerning this point, Yu Qiuyu says: "As everyone knows, this subject matter eventually scintillates with a most bright and beautiful hue in the hand of Hong Sheng, a playwright of the Qing Dynasty." (Yu Qiuyu, *A Historical Survey of Chinese Theatrical Culture* (Changsha: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985), p. 76]

[9] Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (1644-1912), vol. 1, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), s. v. "Hung Shêng", p. 375.

[10] Quoted in Xu Shuofang, "*Changsheng-dian*-de zuozhe zenyang xiang zai ta yiqiande jizhong xiquxuexi", in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji* (Peking: Zuojia Chubanshe, 1951), p. 486. Li refers to Li Bai (701-762), Du to Du Fu (712-770), Bai to Bai Juyi (772-846), Wen to Wen Tingyun (812?-866), and Li to Li Shangyin (c. 813-c. 858).

[11] But without comparing it with *Palace of Eternal Life*, this play may appear an approval of love, for example: "The play is a romantic story of the trials and triumphs of love, capitalizing on the sorrows of separation and death for its emotional impact." Gilert C. F. Fong, "Western Influence and the Rise of Modern Chinese Drama", in by Yun-tong Luk (ed.), *Studies in Chinese-Western Comparative Drama* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990), p. 14.

[12] W. Dolby, "Yuan Drama", in *Chinese Theatre: From its origin to the present day*, edited by Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p. 43.

[13] Wang Jisi believes that the motif of imperial love in these works, including *Palace of Eternal Youth* and *Peach Blossom Fan* (*Taohua Shan*, by Kong Shangren), is used mainly to "express the rise and decline of the historical era", which is perhaps why these works are all of great scale. See his foreword in *Taohua shan*, op.cit., p. 10.

Shuofang (20th century) says: "The inheritances of *Palace of Eternal Life* from Bai Pu's Variety Play are direct ones."[14]

Of the many reasons for the difference between Asian and European drama in the realm of imperial or royal love drama, the polygynous system which is often seen as characteristic of oriental countries deserves particular attention. Polygamy as marital institution or customary system derives from a patriarchal regime, reflects the formalisation or appearance of male power over females, and has further implications of social inequality in general. This twofold significance is most typically epitomised by imperial marriages, in which the female is not only a dominated sexual partner but also a submissive subject, and in which also the male imperial priority in sexual matters is most blatantly sanctioned by political prerogatives and social hierarchy. Thus the courtly romantic scene in the East may be regarded as a miniature which shows the core dominating-and-dominated relationships of society, so that in its depictions of imperial and royal love oriental drama exhibits a broader ideological horizon, whereas in European countries monogamy has in historical times mostly been the norm for all social levels, and in this social unity the theme of imperial or royal love has held less potential to inform about special social conditions.

There is another, psychological reason for the cultural differences. For a long time, for instance, the Chinese in general took imperial privileges in matters of love and sex for granted and considered them to be rationally based. There was a mixture of jealousy and admiration in the Chinese people's deeper psyche, given which few of the audience would hold particularly hostile critical attitudes towards the privileges, audiences tending to be quite sympathetic towards the achievement or maintenance of happiness by the imperial protagonists onstage. Sanskrit drama preserves semi-historical matter in its epic plays and reflects a more primeval type of polygamy, and similar states of psychology may be detected in what survives of the drama. [15]

Through the dramatic motif of imperial or royal love, a vast cultural backdrop may be unfolded, deep historical sediments disclosed, and multifarious points of view expressed. The first part of the following discussion, however, will mainly be concerned

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[14] Xu Shuofang, "*Changsheng-dian*-de zuozhe", in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu*, op. cit., p. 486.

[15] As for this, G. L. Anderson said: "The hero's heart is capacious enough to retain love and affection for a wife or former love while he is occupied with a new love. Love is the subject, in fact, of many dramas, *Shakuntala* is typical in that the hero is a king who already has several wives . . .". G. L. Anderson, *Indian Drama*, in G. L. Anderson (ed.), *The Genius of the Oriental Theater* (The New American Library & The New English Library Limited, 1966), p. 12. As for the female parts, they are equally liberal and tolerant of patriarchal licentiousness, which reflects, from the opposing angle, primeval sexual harmony rather than sexual tension and conflict.

to make an extended textual comparison between *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala,* raising some of the essential issues, but, owing to the limitations of time and space, making no claim to exhaust the conceptual wealth of these dramas.

2

2. 1

Thematically, the major conflict is between the injustices of court affairs and the eulogisings of imperial and royal love. The romantic affairs in both plays, however much beautified or enhanced by the embellishment of literary creativity, are orchestrated against the background of polygamous and aristocratic privilege, each of which is complementary to the other. Polygamy is born of the patriarchal society that speaks blatantly for male domination over female, and casts private sexuality and societal regulations as one and the same coin, and the interwoven relationships between political privilege, sexual rights and patriarchal dominance is nowhere more in evidence than in these relationship at the apex of the state.

The point emerges objectively, and not by authorial intent, in both *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala*, and if the layers of panegyric pigment are stripped, the bitter reality of the injustice done to various females is laid bare. Against the oppression and humiliation stand the heroines' struggles and resistance, but such defences are easily crushed and result in but more miseries. When Lady Yang shows her jealousy and offended dignity, she is shortly abandoned by the emperor as a punishment, and moreover, when the barbarian rebellion occurs and the imperial troops refuse the edict to advance, the emperor even has her commit suicide in order to appease the mutineers. Shakuntala's resistance is more passive. When denounced, she reproves the king, and vanishes from the ordinary human world by supernatural means, this constituting a protest against the maltreatment of her as a female.

Thus from certain angles of feminism or sociology, the romantic affairs in both plays can readily be viewed as patriarchal sexual oppression, and as a matter of fact, such social injustice and sexual maltreatment that existed both in reality and literature have lead scholars to the conclusion that, "in classical times, love in its real sense did not exist between monarch and his consorts"[16]. In accordance with this way of thinking, the love

[16] Zhang Yihe, "Chuanju *Pan Jinlian*-de qushi yu shiwu", in *Pan Jinlian: Junben he juping*, (Shenghuo Dushu Xinzhi Sanlian-shudian, 1986), p. 159. In mainland China, there has been a great deal of controversy over the evaluation of the love affair between the protagonists in *Palace of Eternal Life*, and the remark cited above is clearly a repercussion dictated by the mood of the historical period.

between Li and Yang has commonly been denied.[17] This verdict is too simplistic, however, substituting as it does a mechanical sociological formula for even-handed analyses of social complexity, and seriously overlooks the positive contributions of literary creativity and sophisticated artistry. Such an arbitrary conclusion may firstly be rejected by intuitive impressions, and, more crucially, is actually a paralogism. The following analysis will show that, in our plays, in spite of social injustice and sexual oppression, love burgeons towards a consummation, in the course of which development such edifying qualities as *fidelity* and *equality*, *constancy* and *passion*, sublime ideals and long-term aspirations, all play their part.

2. 2

Although art reflects reality by a union of many perspectives, it often confines its ideological discussion within certain boundaries, using the boundaries to maintain consistency and to a certain extent ignoring any conflicts that transcend these boundaries. The connectedness and internal coherence of the plot rely on such artistic fictions. In the case of drama, this is particularly important. Whereas the novel has far more capacity for wider and less predelineated analytic exposition and poetry penetrates the confusions and obscurities of phenomena so as to approach a philosophical clarity through non-formal-logical channels[18]-- philosophy itself in its highest forms often being highly poetic,[19] drama, on the other hand, owing to technical restrictions such as those on change of place and time and the limitations of its media, such as the actors, stage and theatre building, has to keep its subject more carefully within understood boundaries in order to convey its partial veracities and relative authenticities.

This dramatic psychology is reflected by a formal element -- *the unity of action*, which requires particular tightness in the episodes in response to certain widespread theatrical attitudes. The stage is a self-sufficient world, and anything beyond the stage is

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[17] Cf. Fang Zheng, "Guanyu Shandong Daxue Zhongwenxi dui *Changsheng-dian*-de taolun", in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji* (Peking: Zuojia Chubanshe, 1957).

[18] Cf. Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805): "But that which poetry obtains excellently by indirect means it would accomplish very badly as an immediate end. Poetry is not made to serve in man for the accomplishment of a particular matter, nor could any instrument be selected less fitted to cause a particular object to succeed, or to carry out special projects and details. Poetry acts on the whole of human nature, and it is only by its general influence on the character of a man that it can influence particular acts." F. Schiller, "The Pathetic", in Bernard F. Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1974), p. 466.

[19] This feature becomes easily visible in Hegel and appears in the late 19th century. Regarding tragedy as the summit of poetical art, Schopenhauer (1788-1860) says, the "knowledge, purified and heightened by suffering itself, reaches the point at which the phenomenon, the veil of Maya [*Maya* means appearance or illusion] no longer deceives it." See his "The World as Will and Idea", in Dukore, Bernard F. (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), p. 516.

beyond that world and out of the bounds of discussion. As the Chinese saying goes, "The stage is a small world, the world is a huge stage", and this notion is also advocated by the illusionist naturalist stage and, interestingly, by its opposite, the modernist theatre. As Keir Elam says, each dramatic work should be "seen to explore 'its own autonomous world' and to contain 'its own ontological perspective'. . . . This position appears to be supported by dadaist, surrealist or absurdist works".[20] This being so, drama is allowed to be more arbitrary, as the audience are not supposed, although perfectly entitled, to make this miniature of the world and the reality of society overlap and expose discord between the dramatic universe and the factual cosmos. In actual practice, drama has the strongest powers to evoke empathy, by the magic spell which renders spectators more easily subject to the impositions of the special logic of a work's artistry. The audience leans more towards tolerant indulgence than to spoilsport and otherwise unproductive dull logicality and over-literal accuracy. This attitude can also be perceived in the linguistic terms. In Chinese, one of the main terms for *drama* is *xi*, the basic meaning of which is "to sport", "to make fun", the English *play* having similar connotations.

When *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala* deal with such complicated matters as monarchic love, they do not adopt a detached, bird's-eye view of the subject matter, nor attempt to assemble all feasible sociological relevancies, but, on the contrary, avoid unfavourable aspects as much as possible. Drama has a different mission from social sciences. Take our present choice of plays, for example. They have not taken it as their duty to challenge patriarchal superiority and monarchic privilege in sexual relations and matrimony, which were legally approved and politically institutionalised. Recognising the claims and coherence of historical rationalities, they create their own dramatic cosmos, imbuing it with its own artistically consistent logic. This is what may be called *artistic pretence* or *aesthetic assumption*. Once this point of view has been adopted, disputes over imperial love such as mentioned above are rendered clearly unnecessary, for the above contradictions are mainly caused by a confusion of the artistic and the real worlds that bring about a clash between different kinds of rational framework.

The major argument against the validity of romantic imperial love is concise. It is that between a sovereign and his consort, "there is not a minimum of fidelity"[21]. Faced with this argument, one is obliged to analyse how *fidelity* has primacy for true love.

2. 3

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[20] Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London & New York: Metheun, 1980), p. 104.

[21] Zhang Yihe, "Chuanju *Pan Jinlian*", op. cit., p.159.

Fidelity (differentiable from the concept of faithfulness) stands essentially in antagonism with polygamy and patriarchy. The monarchic dominance over females and absolute sexual libertinism are, in fact both inimical to genuine romantic love, since such love requires fidelity, an emotion and attitude which derives from and results in the further concept of *equality*. However such moral standards do not hold for the imperial or royal court, by the norms of which love affairs become abnormal in the general sense, since general standards are discordant with the social codes that royalty is expected or permitted to observe and which rationalise and morally justify the absolute formal power of male over female in love affairs. Owing to this fact, love in such plays as *Shakuntala* or *Palace of Eternal Life* is, by general non-imperial or non-royal standards often undervalued and depreciated.

When trying to reduce the unfavourable elements in the subject matter to the minimum, as a committed and responsible artist, the playwright also looks squarely at the essential conflict between fidelity on the one hand and polygamy plus patriarchy on the other, the latter being typified by the royal system of concubinage. Faced, however, with a contradiction between his subjective intention and objective conditions, he uses the contradiction as impetus to drive his plot. In the constant conflict with perfidy, fidelity as a concept is further developed, configured and tempered. The romantic affairs escalate from the sensuous and sensual level to the realm of philosophy and poetry, and eventually reach their zenith of sublimity. Through this process, the male role gradually gives up his extreme freedom and finds himself emotionally committed and obligated, his licentious and unfaithful existence being overcome and transformed by the growth of his sense of fidelity. As a result, the lovers turn into romantic paragons, by whom the deepest connotations of love are fully realised. From this point of view, even if the argument that denies the possibility of fidelity between monarch and his consorts has some reason to it, it definitely does not apply to our plays.

Fidelity as an emotional category exists in association with equality as a sociological category. From a sociological angle, the relationship between Dushyanta and Shakuntala, and that between emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang, are not one of equality, and such social conditions usually prevent love affairs from reaching perfection in such matters as fidelity, this often being conducive to what in literature are termed tragic conflicts. All the same, romantic love belongs principally to the realm of feelings and emotions, separate and distinct from questions of social inequality and more fundamentally vital. The equality of such love is created by fidelity, which, although it cannot of itself alter social differences and imbalances, as love's quintessence can overcome all social barriers and plug the gaps between social classes. Similarly,

unfaithfulness may differ in accordance with social diversities, but is more basically a question of individual emotional inequalities and imbalances.

The importance of fidelity to the concept of love is emphasised in *Shakuntala*, and to this end, the king's faithlessness is deliberately mitigated and his constancy highlighted. Regarding this, the incident that Shakuntla loses the ring plays a vital role, providing an excuse for his disowning Shakuntala, so as to keep his image perfect or decent. He remains in fact always true to his love, as a phase of apparent infidelity is occasioned by the loss of his memory and is predestined by irresistible supernatural forces, so that his denunciation of his love should not count as a personal lapse. The nature of this logical reduction and the significance of this incident can readily be comprehended from the fact that it is embodied in the play's full title, *Shakuntala* ***and the Ring of Recognition*** (Emboldenings mine).

Shakuntala does not efface the capricious romantic records of Dushyanta, a reflection of his real historical self. His love with Shakuntala is at the same time a betrayal of another woman, and the text mentions at least one of his sexual conquests prior to his marriage with our heroine. The licence of his life is depicted in Act Five, when Shakuntala is due to come and rejoin her royal husband:

> Madhavya (listening). Hark! my dear friend, listen a minute, and you will hear sweet sounds proceeding from the music-room. Someone is singing a charming air. Who can it be? Oh! I know. The queen Hansapadika is practising her notes, that she may greet you with a new song.
>
> King. Hush! Let me listen.
>
> A Voice (Sings behind the scene).
>
> *How often hither didst you love,*
> *Sweet bee, to kiss the mango's cheek;*
> *Oh! leave not, then thy early love,*
> *The lily's honeyed lip to seek.*
>
> King. A most impassioned strain truly!
>
> Madhavya. Do you understand the meaning of the words?
>
> King (Smiling). She means to reprove me, because I once paid her great attention, and lately deserted her for the queen Vasumati. Go, my dear fellow, and tell Habsapadika from me that I take her delicate reproof as it is intended.
>
> . . .
>
> King (aside). Strange! that song has filled me with a most peculiar sensation. A melancholy feeling has come over me, and I seem to yearn after some long-forgotten object of affection.[22]

[22] All quotations of this play are from *Shakuntala and the Ring of Recognition*, translated by Monier Williams, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1867), in *The Genius of the Oriental Theater*, edited by G. L. Anderson, Mentor Books (The New American Library & The New English Library Limited, 1966), pp. 75-6.

This scene is not only an elegy for now deserted dames, but also foreshadows the misfortune of Shakuntala, by exposing the constant sway of caprice in the court. In view of the latter, the heroine herself may also be ranked among those of the fair sex damaged by the whims of patriarchy. Although her rejection has largely been due to the irresistible supernatural interference, the audience is still presented through it with the bare fact and naked reality of how cavalierly and callously females are maltreated by the patriarch-aristocrat. In this way, a historical truth tenaciously manifests itself through the gauzy veil of dramatic artistry and poetry.

Technically, Dushyanta's nobility and his persistence in love are restored to credibility by the subsequent recovery of the ring and the return of his memory and feelings for her. This recovery is the opportunity for the rehabilitation of his fidelity: "Ever since that moment, he has yielded himself a prey to the bitterest remorse. . . .

> *He loathes his former pleasures; he reflects*
> *The daily homage of his ministers.*
> *On his lone couch he tosses to and fro,*
> *Courting repose in vain.* [23]

and,

> *He is completely so out of his mind that the festival has been prohibited.*[24]

His mental anguish restores his image as a perfect lover with genuine feelings of true love, matching the perfection of his partner. By this point, social inequality is eclipsed by emotional equality. Such emotional equality is a creation of fidelity, wherein lies the quintessence of love. When such a balance is attained, all the social imbalances recede in significance. As Sanumati says in the play: "Now that I have seen him, I can well understand why Shakuntala should pine after such a man, in spite of his disdainful rejection of her."[25] So the play is idealistic, attaining the perfection of both protagonists and the impending congugal consummation. The comment below may throw light on this aspect:

> Sanskrit drama served as a model of ideal human behaviour. The idealization of the characters, their values and actions, all point to this lofty ultimate aim. Sanskrit drama is not a drama of protest or reaction but a theatre of elevated ideals. Guided by the

[23] Ibid., p. 93.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

Natyasastra's[26] rule, the writers co-operated with and lived within their society rather than breaking down barriers or exhibiting individualistic points of view.[27]

In the same respect, *Palace of Eternal Life* is very close to *Shakuntala*. Owing to the prevalent concubinage systems of imperiality and the -- as viewed from the standpoint of a commoner -- licentious life of the supreme rulers, it would, for instance, not have been dramaturgically sensible to mould the emperor's image as that of a virgin. The play not only takes it for granted that the emperor has had sex with numerous partners, but goes so far as to give some of those affairs a space in the drama, even though they, as might be viewed as aberrations, are markedly in opposition to the notion of fidelity to one lover. Twice the play dramatises his affairs with other court ladies, firstly with the Duchess of Guo, a cousin of Lady Yang (Acts Five and Six), and then with Lady Plum Blossom (Mei Fei, see Acts Seventeen and Eighteen). Moreover, when Lady Yang shows her resentment to his attentions to other women, she is banished from his presence or ends up expressing compliance. In this we are shown the extent of the inequality, which seems to exist between sexual partners rather than romantic lovers in any idealistic sense.

The relationship between fidelity and equality is also made plain in this work. Once the principle of fidelity is endangered, that of equality is accordingly also imperilled. The first time when she stubbornly protests, Lady Yang is morally right according to the precepts of romantic love, but her protests offend the emperor and result in such a severe degree of banishment that she is deprived of her imperial title and dismissed from the court, and is not recalled until she sends a lock of her hair to him, thereby reawakening his amorous yearnings for her. This scene reveals to the fullest the interaction between imperial political power over subjects, and, patriarchy's dominance over famales`11111. When she is called back, Lady Yang says to the emperor: "Your slave deserves death for her offence, . . . but now I behold your serene countenance, I shall die content." At this moment, it is hard to understand how love can have existed between a pair with such relationship, and small wonder that some critics strongly deny that there is really any such love between them.

The second incident is more dramatic. The emperor visits Lady Plum Blossom surreptitiously. When she gets wind of it, Lady Yang forces her way into the lovers' chamber, and barely misses catching them there together. This time, however, she shows much more capacity and flexibility, and uses wise guiles to put an end to his relationship with Plum Blossom.

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[26]. *Natyasastra,* actors' tutor or stage manager; footnote mine.

[27] *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*, edited by James R. Brandon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 69.

If we fix our eye only on this side of the coin, the relationship between the emperor and Lady Yang scarcely merits the designation of romantic love. Nevertheless, this is only the incipient phase of their romance, and later developments and the reverse side of the coin are to provide compensation and more balance to the relationship. Fidelity is created in the very course of the struggle against perfidy, and this naturally leads to romantic equality.[28]

Palace of Eternal Life came into being much later than *Shakuntala*, and is not only representative of Chinese drama in its maturity, but also bears the hallmarks of more modern sophistication. Because of that the plot takes a much more involved path and accounts with psychological intricacy and complex ideas. In spite of that greater feel of modernity, however, when facing problems like those in *Shakuntala* of the conflict between faithfulness and capriciousness, it solves the problem in a similar manner. In *Shakuntala*, the king is free from blame because the mishap in the romance is a sanction imposed by supernatural power, while in *Palace of Eternal Life* the emperor's initial lack of fidelity is also pardonable, since his betrayal of love is later redeemed by the ardour of his keeping faith with Lady Yang, and his emotion that is still tempered to the very end, even, and largely, after her death. After she has died, he longs for her day and night, searching for her on Earth and in Heaven, and as he was so often physically with her in her life, he now after her death keeps her constant company in spirit. This indeed is true fidelity, and indeed such ordinary words as fidelity and faithfulness seems scarcely to do justice to the fervour and endurance of his feelings, hence the use of the word "eternal" in the title, with its superhuman, more metaphysical connotations.

2. 4

Equality is a necessary companion of fidelity, and the pairs of lovers in both plays attain to it in the course of events. In *Shakuntala*, equality is seen when Shakuntala and Dushyanta match each other as queen and king in terms of social status, as wife and husband in terms of matrimony, and, more vitally, as lovers in terms of their mutual fondness. In this play, equality is fully realised in both terms of readily tangible social position and marriage status, and of the more amorphous realm of emotions. Equality in terms of emotion is the most seminal of equalities, being the sturdy guarantor and foundation for the more easily visible equilibrium in social status, and the more observable qualities of social status constituting a physical embodiment, externalisation and materialisation of the inner identities of their affections. As for *Palace of Eternal*

[28] Hong Sheng says about his motivation for composing this play: "Later I just thought that such sincerity of love is **really rare** in the imperial court, . . .". My emboldenings. See "Liyan", in *Chang-sheng dian*, ed. Xu Shuofang, op. cit., p. 1.

Life, equality is realised, time-wise, in the afterlife and, spatially, in Heaven, this situation being compelled by the fact that the social gap between the lovers in reality or mortal life is hard or impossible to resolve. Strictly speaking, such a realisation of equality is limited to metaphysical senses, and what factually creates equality is only emotions. That is a difference from *Shakuntala*, in which, although the lovers union takes place in heaven, that supernatural heaven is yet to be considered as substantial a realm as the mortal world, the relation between heaven and earth not being regarded as analogous to that between life and death, or between the present life and the afterlife. The heaven in *Shakuntala* is actually, so to speak, an extension of the human world. In *Palace of Eternal Life*, on the other hand, the three realms of mortal world, netherworld and heavenly world are made clearly distinct, and the nature of the heroine's life is distinguished accordingly. The movement of incidents from Act Twenty-five, where the heroine dies, onward is impelled basically by the concept of fidelity. It is elevated above the literal reality of social contradictions, and the outcome is simply a spiritual triumph -- a realisation of *equality* owing to the fulfillment of *fidelity*. By this triumph, the significance of fidelity is highlighted, and spiritual and metaphysical factors combine to introduce the tenet or prime principle of eternity. The eternity is that of everlasting love, in other words of the prolonging of fidelity into unknown supernatural dimensions. To this end, the play is to a quite exceptional and striking proportion preoccupied with events occurring after the heroine has died, these covering no less than twenty-five of the total fifty acts.

In *Palace of Eternal Life*, although equality in the politico-social sense is not substantiated in reality, yet, inequality in the same sense is indeed destroyed. By the death of Lady Yang's physical mortal person, the social relationship between him and her as monarch and subject, or as emperor and consort, has actually ceased to exist. This signifies by implication that the inequality itself has been broken, and that then what is left is fidelity, and this fidelity impels the plot toward emotional balance, to the equality demanded of romantic love.

Fidelity, as the supreme norm and perfect form of love, attracts lovers towards it, and also operates as the inherent impetus for the conceptual evolution of love. In this play a strong philosophical aura prevails. While emotional equality between lovers is created by fidelity, a universal equality is potentially creatable by universe-pervading love. As its sphere of application is expanded and its connotations deepened, it transcends gender and private emotions, and by its ubiquity would undoubtedly equalise all individuals, affording what seems the only conceivable way for Man and Nature to be identified with each other in perfect harmony. A typical sign of this is seen, for instance, in the final act, set in the Moon Palace, where the emperor will not allow the

necromancer to address him "Your Majesty",[29] and when he meet the Moon Mistress, they solute each other on equal ceremonies.[30]When he eventually meets Lady Yang again, all the traditional courtly decorum which reflects the hierarchy is dispensed with,[31] this in itself demonstrating that the only important relationship between them is now that of love, the former functions of emperor and imperial consort having to all intents and purposes ceased to exist. As the Moon Mistress and the emperor meet, each bids the other spare themselves the customary ceremonial paying of respects, and this may be viewed as symbolising the metaphysical equality between mankind and the cosmic forces, or between Man and Nature, the Moon and its ruler being used as metonyms for Nature or Heavenly Order. The play ends with a gathering of grandees and a magnificent scene of collective dancing and singing, and at such a juncture and in such circumstances the identity of the dancers or singers becomes unimportant, only the dances and songs having significance, as representing the substitution of individuality by collectivity and universality, and of commonality for diversity.[32] All of this transformation is due to an all-embracing love which results in a Supreme Harmony (*Taitong*, or Ultimate Conformity). Such an idea of equality in terms of sexual relationships, contains the absolute which transcends historical conditions, because "the first tenet of modern ethics of sexes is to destroy the sexual discrimination and establish the sincerity of equality."[33]

2. 5

Conflicts between *individuality* and *generality* or collectivity, and between *free will* and *social obligations*, are often encountered by commoners, whereas the supreme Earthly monarch, who can legally put his personality beyond the usual constraints of social and political institutions is, or is assumed to be more rarely faced with such conflicts. This would seem particularly so in the case of monarchic love. Given the absolutist prerogatives granted ancient monarchs in private life, bolstered by the absolutist dictates of patriarchy's dominance of male over female and by their political power over their subjects, in theory there should never be any obstacle to their amorous impulses. Imperial and royal love might be disrupted or interfered with on certain special

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[29] *Changsheng dian* (*Palace of Eternal Life*), edited by Xu Shuofang (Peking: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1980), p. 217.

[30] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., p. 221.

[31] They embrace each other in front of the public, and cry. *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., pp. 220-1.

[32] As in Dante's heaven (of *The Divine Comedy*), because of Love, all individual figures turn pale and insubstantial and become shadows only, and at the higher and highest levels of heaven, what remains are only music and light dancing.

[33] Chen Xinghui, "Zhencao, jipin, xing-de chengnuo ji qita", *Sinorama* (*Guanghua*), February 1991, p. 75.

occasions. For example, emperor Yuandi of the Han reluctantly gives up his court lady Wang Zhaojun to the Mongolian khan, forced to do so by the need to dissolve the diplomatic tension between two nations. Even in this case, however, the decision is largely up to him. When emperor Minghuang of the Tang (as the historical figure rather than *dramatis personae* falls in love with Yang Yuhuan, his daughter in law, he is constrained by ethical norms, but swiftly pushes aside such obstacles, firstly by having her made a nun, and then by allowing her restoration to lay life and bringing her to his court and choosing her as his consort. Much later, however, he is obliged by a grave crisis to have her commit suicide to appease mutineers. In *Alexander and Campaspe*, even though emperor Alexander has to compete with a rival, a painter, for a beautiful woman, when he eventually yields her it is none the less of his own free will.

That is not to say that there is no conflict in imperial love, for if it were so, there would be no drama about it. The conflict of imperial love unfolds itself in different manners, not manifesting itself a plainly visible clash between personal intention and social environment, but as a struggle within the participants' subjective realm, a struggle in the nature of an internal conflict.

Such conflicts are expressed as two forms, firstly as an opposition between mutual admiration, dependent on equal ranking, and domination, based on dominant male power, and secondly as an opposition between the ruler's ideal of pure and genuine love and his, romantically speaking, wrong-minded concepts of his own freedom, this latter easily conducive of romance-unfavourable psychology that impedes the realisation of true love. This eventually reflects the paradox between individuality and the social norm: since imperial licentiousness has been moralised into an ethical standard and legalised into the societal institution, true love between the monarch and his consorts should, surprisingly, have been considered as an abnormality, an aberration, or even as a serious transgression. As will be discussed below, this point is highlighted in Act Twenty-five, in which Lady Yang is immolated (ritualistically in some sense) and Emperor Minghuang scolded simply for their mutual amorous saturation and romantic infatuation. In this sense, their love is a triumph of individuality, even though still bound within the sphere of imperiality. As Nietzsche says:

> Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself; because he has to interpret in a quite individual way even the words he has inherited. His interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if he does not create a formula: as an interpreter he is still creative.[34]

[34] "Principles of a New Evaluation: The individual: 767 (1883--1888)", in his *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Walter Kaufmann (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), p. 403.

In the first instance, when the supreme ruler falls in love he occupies a position of twofold status. On the one hand, he is a lover with emotions stemming from his human nature, while, on the other, he is still a dictator with his political nature defined by society. This duality is reflected in his inner mental world and gives rise to psychological conflict there. In this way, his freedom becomes a limitation,[35] a negative factor for romance, since love's mutuality requires an even exchange of admiration and respect, whereas domination demands subordination. The supreme ruler can not attain love in the genuine sense unless he abandons his political superiolity for emotional equality, even giving up his arbitrary power-granted sexual liberties for the sake of self-denying commitment; he has no choice but to acknowledge that the harsh selfishness of power has no application in the realm of love, where delicate and tender, empathising give-and-take, willing submission and even self-sacrifice are absolutely essential. This idea is illustrated by *Palace of Eternal Life* in that whenever the emperor behaves as a ruler and resorts to the exercise of patriarchal power, love is endangered and the lovers are distanced from each other by a social gap, whereas whenever love thrives and lovers become intimate, traditional imperial dignity, vanity, superiority, arrogance and domination must give way, at least temporarily.

This is the essence of the conflict in the emperor's internal world, and the heroine undergoes a corresponding inner struggle, she having a similarly dual identity, as his love and at the same time as his consort who principally serves as the imperial sexual object, so that when her personality and dignity are assailed, she becomes a mere sexual victim, and the purity of love is abused. For example, when she comes to court and has the title of "imperial consort" conferred on her, their relationship is basically that between the emperor and a consort. At this moment, although they pledged their love and vowed to Heaven and Earth, although the description of their romanticities is highly eulogistic and extremely colourful, it still lacks artistic conviction, since the profundity of love has not yet been nurtured. As a matter of fact, such pledge is shortly invalidated (see Act Eight and Nine, etc.) and eventually nullified (Act Twenty-five). Her banishment demonstrates imperial power over the female as a sexual partner as well as a feudal vassal, and of course puts a stop to their love and sexual relations. Later, the thread of their love is only taken up once more when the emperor relinquishes the prerogatives of his dominant

[35] Nietzsche says: "The highest form of individual freedom, of sovereignty, would in all probability emerge not five steps from its opposite, where the danger of slavery hangs over existence like a hundred swords of Damocles. Look at history from this viewpoint: the ages in which the 'individual' achieves such ripe perfection, i.e., *freedom*, and the classic type of the *sovereign man* is attained -- oh, no, they have never been humane ages!" Friedrich Nietzsche, "Principles of a New Evaluation: The individual: 770 (Jan. -Fall 1888)", in *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Walter Kaufmann (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), p. 404.

temporal power and becomes submissive to her, calling her back and apologising with a sincere heart. Their love now deepened, he becomes increasingly submissive and his air of imperial majesty is bit by bit diluted, so that by the time Lady Yang forces her way into his chamber where he has been sleeping with his previously deserted concubine Plum Blossom, the emperor has totally lost his overbearing imperiality and become a humorous, docile egalitarian lover.[36] In the nigh farcical scene where this occurs, he virtually plays the role of clown, and the pervading comical atmosphere itself further proclaims that the awesomeness of regality has been replaced by good-natured wit and love's level communion. The play reaches its most powerfully moving phases from the heroine's death onwards, when, now that the actual mortal social relationship between emperor and consort has been terminated, they have both literally disengaged themselves from all social implications, and therefore float together as equals in "the stream of love", in other words having become lovers pure and simple, this change being marked by the transition from the more narrative emphasis of the prior half of the play to a second half more lyrical in language and general treatment of theme.

Shakuntala is evidently aware of this point as well. Before he is smitten with love, the king's image is that of an almighty monarch and a condescending protector of his subjects, including the religious hermits among whom dwells his subsequent lover. Once he falls in love with Shakuntala, however, he is at once aware that his identity of kingship is a drawback, so woos her in the guise of a mere warrior, so that are both able to behave in the egalitarian manner common to ordinary lovers, with no marked social differences between them.[37] They both feel in some measure inferior to each other, are both dominating and submissive, and such a romantic confusion displays the simplicity of love in more ancient times, as reflected in much primitive mythology. This kind of conflict is less intense than that in *Palace of Eternal Life*, because the dramatic conflict is also romance-weakeningly impelled by external supernatural forces and diluted by its symbolic meanings. Yet it is a true conflict, for all that.

The second internal conflict takes place between the king's sincere pursuit of love and his misunderstanding and abuse of the political prerogatives that grant him the extremely free exercise of his will . The ultimate ideal of true romantic love commands fidelity, fidelity demands whole-hearted concentration on, and single-souled obssesion

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[36] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 19.

[37] He offers a ring to Priyamvada, and both the maidens, reading the name Dushyanta on the seal, look at each other with surprise. The king says: "Nay, think not I am King Dushyanta. I am only the king's officer, and this is the ring I have received from him as my credentials." See Act 1, p. 33. -- All examples cited in this thesis are from *Shakuntala and the Ring of Recognition*, translated by Monier Williams, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1867), in *The Genius of the Oriental Theater*, edited by G. L. Anderson, Mentor Books (The New American Library & The New English Library Limited, 1966).

of,an irreplaceable object, and, although love has its own directions of freedom, such concentration and obssesion once in operation requires self-limitation rather than any continued unrestrained freedom of choice. If the balance between liberty and restriction is endangered, freedom will become alien to love, an element unfavourable to it, which may render the lover a libertine, make him digress from the persistence of his pursuit, and in so doing distance him from his or her romantic destination. In Acts Eight and Nine of *Palace of Eternal Life* for example, when the emperor's sexual freedom comes up against Lady Yang's expression of her jealousy, he is bound to, and duly does, acknowledge the limitations on his freedom, by admitting his error and recalling her to favour, otherwise he would lose her for ever and there could be no fulfilment of their romance; and such a loss would not be compensated since she is, as proven later on, peerless or unique for him. In the second half of the play, his concentration of his affections upon her alone is underlined, this being a necessary precondition for the eventual success of their perfect love-match, for if he continued to dispense his affection prodigally among a number of his consorts, he would never be able to attain such love, consummate and everlasting.

In *Shakuntala* similar circumstances prevail. Even given that the blame to be attached to the king for his disowning of Shakuntala is diminished because he was under the malicious influence of a whimsical and irascible deity, all the same it is half insinuated that he is tainted with lack of love-faith. The incident is permitted to be understood in two ways. On the surface, it is due to the supernatural power's toying with the fate of human beings, but on the deeper thematic plane it symbolises the unrestrained licence of royal life and the unethically augmented freedoms granted to kings. This latter point becomes clearer from an exposition of the background to this incident. The beginning of Act Five, as cited before,[38] functions as a pregnant point of departure. It touches upon the king's capricious romantic history, in which he has abused his freedom and treated members of the opposite sex badly, and in foreshadowing the unfortunate aspects of Shakuntala's subsequent fate reminds the audience of potent logical connections between her and the other pitiable women who have preceded her. When the heroine's fate turns out to be analogous to these precedents, the same cause for her and their common ill-fortune is implied. In this sense, this incident might be viewed as an artistically indirect implication of his lack of romantic faith, showing how his abuse of his royal freedoms threaten to result in the forfeiture of his beloved.

In seeming paradox, when the "plenipotentiary" ruler falls into the trap of such a conflict, it becomes evident that his extra prerogatives of sexual freedom have resulted in

[38] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., pp. 75-6.

the loss of his individual freedom of choice, since the choice can no longer be up to him. Such royal or imperial liberty is stipulated by regimes, so that any restriction of it, including even self-restriction, constitutes a violation of the political and social norms of such royal or imperial states.[1] Where such occurs, royal liberty has been overwhelmed by forces opposed to pure subjectivity of choice, objective demands that compel the abnegation and loss of liberty. This point has its parallel, of course, in the ordinary everyday life of commoners as well, where the possession of too many choices becomes the equivalent of no choice. Such freedom of choice allows love to be misspent, spent on so many partners that love's ardour is dissipated and made mild. This echoes the inevitable, almost mathematical formula for royalty, whereby too much personal caprice becomes neutralised into bland generality.

3

Most moralistic standards are **relative** in nature, conditioned by such things as history and geography, so that in a patriarchal and polygamic social system the male's dominance and the female's subordination are formally accepted as the norm and formally recognised as being morally sanctioned. Dealing with classical works such as our plays here, it is important to recognise their morality in their particular historical contexts, since it might otherwise easily be dismissed from consideration or arbitrarily denied its validity simply because of its different relative and absolute criteria compared with those of modern times. Given this situation, it is equally important to identify new or other moralities which seem able to transcend the limits of particular historical or geographical environments, to analyse the notional disparities between old and new and otherwise different moral stances, and to weigh the moral judgements implied by the plays both in their own terms and in comparisons.

Despite the commons, The two plays differ from each other as far as this is concerned. In *Shakuntala*, the simple moralisations keep in harmony with the ideas of the principal theme, whereas *Palace of Eternal Life* conveys sceptical attitudes toward the rationalisations of the then publicly accepted moralities of polygamy and patriarchal superiority. In this latter play, morality is no longer a complete unitary concept, but a

[1] The internal clash clearly reflects the forces of the external world. The imperial codes of love, sex and marriage are not the product of the monarch, despite his supreme power in legal matters, but determined by the objective social order and historical conditions. In this situation, the person who has more power may have less personal freedom, as in the case of Medieval Europe, when the upper class was faced with high social and economic pressures which forced them "to use marriage to join house to house and lay field to field. . . . But for the poorer people, often held back from early marriage by economic limitations, the personal choice of a partner based on familiarity and love could become increasingly routine." See John F. Benton, "Clio and Venus: A historical view of medieval love", in F. X. Newman (ed.), *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (New York: Research Foundation of State University of New York, 1968), p. 23.

split has occurred, and the thematic ideas vacillate between two opposed moralistic outlooks.

Shakuntala does not out forward any issues concerning the correctness or otherwise of moral codes in terms of love, sexuality and marriage, but takes patriarchal dominance over the female as complementary to women's virtue. In Act Four, for instance, when Shakuntala is leaving for the court, her foster-father says:

> Kanva. Listen, then, my daughter. When thou reachest thy husband's palace, and art admitted into his family,
>
> *Honour thy betters; ever be respectful*
> *To those above thee: and, should other share*
> *Thy husband's love, ne'er yield thyself a prey*
> *To jealousy; but ever be a friend,*
> *A loving friend, to those who rival thee*
> *In his affections. Should thy wedded lord*
> *Treat thee with harshness, thou must never be*
> *Harsh in return, but patient and submissive.*[40]

In *Shakuntala* and other Sanskrit plays, the heroine is rarely aware of any injustice in such social requirements of women, and is quite oblivious of what nowadays are termed the oppressiveness and humiliation of patriarchy. For instance, when the deserted queen is lamenting her lost love, she views it as simply a personal misfortune rather than ascribing it to any social injustice. The same is true of the hero: "The hero's heart is capacious enough to retain love and affection for a wife or former love while he is occupied with a new love"[41] -- and this is made to sound a glorious virtue. Diversity in the king's romantic life is considered moral, no matter whether it is conducive to more perfection in the nature of love, it being regarded as the natural product of patriarchy and polygamy. As in other Sanskrit plays, in *Shakuntala* the hero also "already has several wives, but . . . is smitten with love for a beauteous maiden."[42]

Palace of Eternal Life presents a logically contentious moral stance. It recognises the historical correctness of polygamy and the imperial system of concubinage to a certain extent, but at the same time, also directly and indirectly proclaims its doubts and disagreements about that supposed correctness, and in the course of the development of the plot there emerge from time to time clashes between patriarchal rule and feminine resentments and resistance. On the surface, such resistance appears to be just Lady Yang's jealousy of the emperor's affairs with other consorts, but in essence such

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[40] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 72.

[41] G. L. Anderson, "Indian Drama", in *The Genius of the Oriental Theater*, edited by G. L. Anderson, op.cit., p. 12.

[42] Ibid.

expressions of personal feelings are backed and sustained by latent moralistic forces and viewpoints. This opposite moral force challenges and is discordant with the formally prevalent moral codes and established nuptial ethics, is governed by such contrasting concepts as fidelity, sincerity and constancy, and calls for the concomitant monogamous relationship versus concubinage.[43]

The resistance takes place four times in the play. The first occasion commences with the emergence of Lady Yang's jealousy, then follows with her banishment and recall. It has been foreshadowed in Acts Five, Six and Seven, and is concentrated in Acts Eight and Nine. The second occasion attains its high-water in Acts Eighteen and Nineteen, when the heroine, greatly distressed by the talk of the emperor's intimacies with Lady Plum Blossom, ventures to verify the rumours. The third occasion, in Act Twenty-two, is mainly in the nature of an abstract conflict, involving no dramatic action. As they make vows of eternal love, and pray for Heaven's blessings on it, the two lovers poetically analyse love and its attendant concepts. The final conflict of the play embodies a convincing solution to their love's problems that transcends chronological and spatial limitations, presenting the victory of an alternative ethics and morality which allows the conflict to be resolved peacefully, after a long and steady build-up spanning the second half of the play. Let us briefly but in slightly more detail review each of the four in turn.

The first resistance appears with her jealousy, which given its context is not to be regarded as merely a reaction to sexual competition, but should be seen in its deeper implications as discontent with the female's conventional position in the sexual relationship and with society's unjust conventional expectations of her as a woman. The discord between the lovers might be viewed as a minor personal matter, but behind both parties is a broad and demanding ideological background. Of course, the meaning of her resistance at this stage is not presented in such a clear-cut manner as modern mentalities and vigorous feminism might expect, and we can only ascertain her combat quite limitedly, since in this act of the play she is more often submissive than protesting or resisting. For instance, when deploring her miserable fate and expressing resentment at the emperor's inconstancy, she regrets her own waywardness, and eagerly hopes that she

[43] "An appendix of the *Philosophy of Right* will distinguish marriage from concubinage by the 'repression' of the natural impulse (there *Naturtrieb* is *zurückgedrängt*). Concubinage on the contrary satisfies the natural impulse." And: "In the natural state, in the Kantian sense, the man's polygamy is nearly natural. The paradigmatic structure resembles the harem's. The man naturally desires the whole sex and not one woman; his dealings are only with exemplars of femininity. He does not love, he loves any woman, no matter whom. The woman is a kind of whore. *Conversely*, in the cultural state, the woman does not indulge the pleasure of the man outside marriage, and of monogamous marriage; but she desires all men and so becomes, in act or intention, the whore." Derrida, "Sexual Difference in Philosophy", in Peggy Kamuf (ed.), *A Derrida Reader* (New York & others: Harvester Wheatsheaf, a division of Simon & Schuster International Group, 1991), pp. 335 & 339.

may somehow or other regain her position. When she is recalled to favour in the following act, she repents her crime of jealousy and offending the monarch, and promises that she will be happy with her position as a consort and never be jealous of any of the other beauties. In this respect, we should remember that this is only an initial step into the combat, and also that she is a flesh-and-blood person in the play, not the incarnation of some feminist abstraction.

Looking closer at the text, we find Lady Yang, having been banished for her jealousy, singing the following:

> *The imperial love flows eastward as does a river:*
> *Gaining his favour, I have no worry,*
> *Falling out of favour, sorrow clutches me.*
> *Don't play "The Flower Fallen" in front of the wine pot!*[44]
> *The chilly wind arises only from the west of the palace.*[45]

Quite a few verses like this are not only of personal lamenting over private misery, but in fact also have sub-texts and overtones. In the above example, the connotation of "the imperial love flows eastward as does a river", indicating irretrievability, goes beyond personal feeling to a statement on the unrestrained sexual mores of emperors in general, while "the west of the palace" in the last line not only refers to the West Palace where she lives, but also, as a commonplace allusion stands for "the palace of imperial consorts in general". Consequently, "the chilly wind" applies to the sad fate of rejection frequently visited upon imperial consorts as a whole.

Her resistance seems to culminate in a kind of submission. When recalled, she sings the following to the emperor:

> *I committed crimes as great as a mountain,*
> *I bear your favour as vast as the heavens,*
> *Now I rebuke myself, and*
> *Never shall I dare envy the other beauties,*
> *But stand contented with my proper station!* [46]

All the same, the other side of the submission is a triumph achieved through resistance, since she has at last regained both her social and emotional status. In the course of ideological antagonism and dramatic conflict, their mutual feeling has been refined, elevated in quality, and in this sense too her resistance has been a victory, as she declares in song at the end of the act:

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[44] *Fallen Flower* (*Luohua*). This is the title of the music.

[45] p. 30. All quotations of this play are my translations from *Changsheng dian*, Zhongguo Gudian Wenxue Duben Congshu, edited by Xu Shuofang (Peking: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1980).

[46] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., ibid, p. 36.

Sincerity is tempered hard and wine cups are filled,
From today on, what else do we need to say of our hearts! [47]

In the second case, Lady Yang's resistance grows fierce as, late in the night or in early dawn, she makes her way abruptly to the Floral Tower in order to try and catch the emperor and her rival in intimacy there. This time she is much more venturesome and assertive. She ridicules the emperor for his intimacy with Lady Plum Blossom and reprimands him for his indulging in pleasure to the neglect of his administration of the state. In a way quite different from the previous instance of resistance, he seeks to appease her to such an extent that he covertly sends Plum Blossom away and feigns innocence, then tries to coax Lady Yang round with many honeyed words, and in the end it is him who backs down and says:

You and I have mutual love,
Even a hundred years is still not enough!
How can you take farewell of me without any good reason?
It is all my fault,
It is all my fault,
I beg your pardon! [48]

Clearly, the heroine now stands in a much stronger position. Although there has been factual improvement of her hierarchical or social status, yet her new position has solely been a child of love, owing its existence to emotional rather than formal societal causes. The sequence has been that the emperor's dominance has been greatly weakened, he has become timid towards her, apologises and submits. Her having the upper hand is simply because of his love for her, and because he allows himself to occupy the position of lover, this automatically limiting the application of his imperial power. This is followed by a further increase in the emotional equilibrium and social equality between them.

It is deserving of attention that his "affair" with Lady Plum Blossom, which by imperial norms would have been taken as nothing out of the ordinary, has now become subject to attack. This signals the growing strength of the opposing morality.

The third episode of resistance, in Act twenty-two, takes the form of an active challenge rather than passive protest, is couched in mainly theoretical terms, and as a thematic embellishment. On the evening of the Seventh of the Seventh Month, the date for the annual tryst of the two star-gods epitomising immortal love, Cowherd and Weaving Damsel, Lady Yang prays to them, expressing herself deeply moved by the

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid, p. 89.

year-long separations that the Monarchof Heaven has imposed upon them, and conveying her admiration of them for their constancy to each other. She then compares her own situation with theirs, and challenges the emperor:

> LADY YANG. Though the Cowherd and the Weaving Damsel meet only once a year, their love is as eternal as Heaven and perpetual as the Earth. I am afraid that your feeling is not so permanent as theirs.[49]

She openly shows her resentment of the imperial fickleness:

> *I fear,*
> *In the flicker of an eyelid,*
> *The flower will grow old, and*
> *The spring will depart without a trace.*
> *Your feeling is not trustworthy!*
> . . .
> *If only it were everlasting,*
> *I would die contented;*
> *If only it would carry on to the end,*
> *I would die with my eyes closed.*
> *For countless singing maidens and dancing lasses,*
> *Fondness changes,*
> *Tenderness shift!*
> *Solitary in deserted chambers,*
> *They are shedding tears and heartached,*
> *And moaning futilely for the fair sex's ill fate.* [50]

Now she is formally demanding a permanent equality between a consort and the emperor, which obviously transgresses against the traditional norms of imperiality. By now their relationship as vassal and supreme monarch has faded into the background, and the romantic linkage occupies the foreground. In other words, once their hearts are as one, the social distinctions are erased. When sincerity and fidelity are requisite, imperial caprice and sexual licence come under criticism. By now the new moral force is taking shape, and the hitherto socially recognised moral system starts looking immoral.

Parallel to Lady Yang's struggle are the emperor's efforts towards self improvement. By now his emotions have entered a new realm. He begins to disengage himself from mundane and boorishly material considerations and to increasingly incline towards love's delicacy and sublimity. He sings:

> *The immortal tie is eternal,*

[49] Ibid, p. 100.
[50] Ibid.

But human bonds are no inferior.
Our love will endure hundreds of years,
We are champions in the romantic arena.[51]

Then they sing a duet about their everlasting love:

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. . . .
If in Heaven,
We wish to be paired birds,
Flying wing to wing.
LADY YANG.
If on Earth,
We wish to be twin trees,
Interfusing branch with branch.
BOTH.
Heaven is eternal,
Earth is perpetual,
And even though they come to an end,
This vow will last continuously,
Never will it be terminated. [52]

As things develop to this point, the particularity of imperial love has vanished. They love as lovers do in general, only better, as romantic paragons as well, but no longer as a supreme temporal ruler and an imperial consort. This is a transcendence that elevates them from the imperial palace into the vaster cosmos, and alters their identities of an imperial couple into those of representatives of universal love. It is furthermore well worth noticing that, once their love has transcended the palace, the concomitant moral forces transcend the restrictions of historical period, seeming to herald a new ethics for times to come.

The final episode of resistance is one that they share, and looms very large in even its spatial predominance, since it occupies as much as half the play, from Act Twenty-five till the finale. To start with, it manifests itself in a violently dramatic fashion, but later on sinks into a superficially peaceful antagonism. This time the conflict does not take place between the different sexes, but between the lovers, as a unity on the one hand and hostile reality on the other.

From its arising in Act Twenty-five, this conflict storms towards its climax, which is followed first by an expedient reconciliation, then by a long calm during which the new morality ferments anew, awaiting the ultimate solution. Act Twenty-five has Lady Yang being sacrificed for the safety of the throne and state, she dying as a righteous martyr. This dramatic violence reflects the warring between different attitudes to women. Those

[51] Ibid.
[52] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., ibid, p. 102.

who demand her death base their demands on a general belief of "beautiful women ruining the state" (*nüse wangguo*), with its specific applications to this particular imperial love match.[53] Although the author's emotional objection to such a verdict clearly betrays itself,[54] yet he by no means overtly rejects this ancient historical maxim, and, on the contrary, deliberately gives some prominence to its viewpoint in Hong Sheng's own preface to his play:

> The extreme of merriment gives birth to sadness, and my play serves as a mirror and lesson for later generations, having allegorical connotations. **Jade Bracelet** [Lady Yang's given name] **bewildered the nation**, and eventually ruined herself [*Yuhuan qingguo, zu zhi yunshen*].[55]

The demand for the heroine's demise is a double entendre. It is justifiable to protest against a monarch who has interfused personal feelings and state affairs and indulged in sensual pleasure to the dereliction of his imperial duties. On the other hand, however, the demand is also a negation of love, claiming that such personal feelings as fidelity, constancy, commitment and obligation to another individual have no place in the function of the monarch. In the former sense, it is a triumph of *Culture* over *Nature*, and in the latter, a failure of *human nature* in the face of the rigidities of *civlisation*.[56] From this

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[53] Such a conflict between emotion and reason, personal feeling and state duty, is highly exaggerated in conventional Chinese thinking, and that is what dissatisfied Hong Sheng. Even in the moment when the emotional side is suppressed in the name of justice and righteousness, love is still persistently protesting against ruthlessness and apathy in the disguised form of reason. Cf.: "I would rather lose my country than see you die!" (said by the emperor, Act 25, p. 113); "Alas, what would it matter even if I were to get to Sichuan!" (said by the emperor, Act 25, p. 116); and: "I shouldn't have let her die. If I had struggled, the mutinous troop would not have rebelled and offended me directly, and even if they had, so what? In any case we would have been an eternal pair at the Yellow Fountain of afterlife!" (said by the emperor, Act 32, p. 141).

[54] As Tu Pien-Pu says: "Most previous writers who have dealt with this love story have laid the blame for the downfall of the empire on Lady Yang. This was a method commonly used in feudal society to defend rulers; for by describing women as temptresses and trouble-makers, they could lay the blame for all disasters on a few beauties, exonerating the rulers from all responsibility. Hung Sheng's attitude, however, is fair and sympathetic." "*The Palace of Eternal Youth* and Its Author", in *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, translated by Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1955), pp. 318-9.

[55] My emboldenings, "Zixu", in *Chang-sheng dian*, ed. Xu Shuofang (Peking: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1980), p. 1.

[56] From a Daoist point of view, the male's sexual relationship to the female is analogous to that of mankind to Nature, and the dark side of this nature is implied by Confucius and emphasised by later ideology. *Nüse wangguo* is a negative interpretation of woman as Nature. The comparison of woman to uncontrollable Nature is more clear-cut in the West, as Carolyn Merchant argues: "Symbolically associated with unruly nature was the dark side of woman. Although the Renaissance Platonic lover had embodied her with true beauty and the good, and the Virgin Mary had been worshipped as mother of the Saviour, women were also seen as closer to nature than men, subordinated in the social hierarchy to the social hierarchy to the men of their class, and imbued with a far greater sexual passion"; and: "The blame for the bodily corruption of the male was attributed directly to lust and temptation by the female in the popular Renaissance belief that each completed male sexual act, or 'little death', shortened the

point of view, the single-object emotion of the emperor is indeed immoral, since it has transgressed against the imperial moral norm. That is why the "infatuation" between the emperor and Lady Yang is deemed unacceptable, and therein lies the trap of love's tragedy.

Such a conflict is also seen in the emperor's internal world. While on the one hand his sacrificing of Lady Yang for the state might be regardable as a selfless, noble and lofty deed, as far as love is concerned it is callous destruction of a loved one. As a monarch his behaviour may be a shining example of righteousness versus personal feeling, but as a lover he can be viewed as a contemptible failure and an executioner. In a particularly historical political sense the deed may be justified to bevirtuous, but in the more absolute light of love it is inhumane and unjust.[57]

It should be pointed out that death is not a solution here, but only an introduction to an expedient means of dealing with opposing moralistic attitudes. These opposites are as yet hidden in the play, but being nourished in preparation for a vital share in the plot. This ever-fermenting moralistic antagonism indeed provides the impetus for the second half of the play. The emperor's beloved is physically destroyed, but his love for her continues tenaciously to hang onto life, indeed to survive with enhanced vigour of resistance, thus preserving the conflict and sharpening the horns of the dilemma. In this second half, the lovers begin their love anew on a higher moral plane and with much more passion, approaching the zenith of sincerity, fidelity, faithfulness and constancy. In this way, they eventually become a couple each of whom has eyes only for the other, whose affections are wholly riveted on the other, this complying with the new ethical situation for them, the age-old ethics of true romantic love, but new for this imperial pair because it is the emotional equivalent of monogamy and has outgrown the imperial system of concubinage. This occurs in a milieu of a romantic utopia, but its occurrence displays an ethics of love that is in advance of the play's background
historical setting.

Such an irreconcilable conflict of moralities impels the play to its climax in both dramatic and thematic senses, paving the way for love to transcend habitual reality and

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life by one day." (This concept of "little death" is, however, diametrically opposed to the Daoist idea. The latter believes that the intercourse between man and woman is in essence of
a communication between Man and Nature, which prolongs, rather than shortens, the life of the male.) Carolyn Merchant, "Nature as Disorder: Women and witches", in her *The Death of Nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution* (London: Wildwood House, 1982).

[57] The similar clash between personal feeling and imperial duty also exists in *Autumn in the Han Palace*, but diametrically opposite views are adopted as well, as pointed out for instance in one of the modern critics' comments on the play: "As emperor, he is incompetent, but as a lover, his devotion and helplessness evoke our sympathy." See Gilbert C. F. Fong, "Western Influence and the Rise of Modern Chinese Drama", in *Studies in Chinese-Western Comparative Drama*, edited by Yun-tong Luk (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990), pp. 15-16.

particularity and to attain a metaphysical dimension conceptualised as Heaven, under this circumstance, love is partly treated as a purely abstract concept. The whole universe is considered touched and emotionally moved by the tale's consummation, and, by this, love is deemed confirmed and proven. This time, love has gone beyond human relationships and entirely broken with social conditions and involvements, being now a matter of spiritual communion rather than physical contact, and, with the female partner no longer living in the mortal world, both lovers are eventually able to draw entirely clear of mortal society. In the last act, their reunion is set on the moon and many celestial figures come to celebrate their happy union. In essence, this celestial community is taken as a miniature of the cosmos, which is intended as a replacement for mortal human society and the mundane world. Before the immortals, the hero has lost his identity as supreme monarch, and the traditional imperial relationship and patriarchal regime are thoroughly deprived of all spiritual significance. Now comes the true solution. The "new" morality is victorious instead, but has gained its victory outside the confines of mortal history and human society. From a realistic point of view the solution is fictional, and from the viewpoint of dramaturgy it is of the *deus ex machina* ilk, but from a philosophical point of view it permits the exposition of absolute truths, an exposition assisted or enabled by love's now existing mainly on the spiritual level. This idea has in fact been running through all the twenty-five acts following the heroine's death, and it is what has permitted the extension of the plot for an astonishing half of the play. Let us quote from the last act for an encapsulation of the dramatist's understanding of essential transcendence of carnality:

> WEAVING DAMSEL.
> *From the Tridivia*[58],
> *We look at the blue seas and Red Dust of the mortal world,*
> *And see them change from blink to blink.*
> *As an eternal couple and perpetual pair,*
> *You shall be always free from care.*
> *Brushing romance's moon aside,*
> *Leaving romance's breeze behind,*
> *Never linger any more in infatuated intercourse of Cloud-and-Rain,*
> *You have put away the pins and box with your former love,*
> *And forgotten secular lust forever and ever.*
>
> . . .
>
> FAIRIES.
> *Angels are by nature tender;*
> *Though the Paradise of Penglai is far,*

[58] *Daoli-tian*, Buddhist term for highest level of heaven.

Love creates the rapport.
Love's essence has won through the havoc,
They are reunited in the end.
In the dusty world,
It is full of bitterness and busy-ness,
On the Tridivia,
Love is eternal and perpetual.
It differs from a worldly dream that is full of
sadness and mirth,
coaxing and cheating,
But where consequently,
Affection proves to be vanity and passion a void.
Jump out of the labyrinth of lust!
Cut the lovesick cord!
Smash the golden cangue!
Loosen the jade chain!
Riding phoenixes with smile,
They ascend the celestial court with leisurely grace.
The old tune of "Rainbow Skirt and Feather Garment"
Is turned into a new version:[59]
Being understood by hearts as one,
It is sung only for the intimate person
Who understands without interpretation;[60]
Owing to this music,
Love will endure for myriad ages, even unto infinity. [61]

All this goes to indicate that Hong Sheng considers that individual spiritual emancipation and the liberation of women are unrealisable in ordinary reality, which is why he configures their success in an imaginary, supernatural realm.

This is merely a plausible-seeming solution to an ethical perplex. To obtain it, the play leaves a vagueness as to whether the emperor has committed himself to Lady Yang's apparition only. The text always keeps away from this sensitive question, only depicting his continuous longing for her. This allows a faint wonder as to whether he may have other sexual partners after the heroine's death, which is inconsistent with the play's logic, and seems a psychological red-herring that insinuates itself into the mind, but all the same may have been intended by the playwright as a requirement of his dramatic theme.

This effect is complemented by the continued concentrating of descriptions on the emperor's ever lingering love yearning and passion for Lady Yang, even though they

[59] When she visited the Moon Palace in her dream, Lady Yang heard this heavenly music and saw the fairy dance, both music and dance sharing the title *Rainbow Skirt and Feather Garment*. Later she transcribed the tune and danced the dance for the Emperor.

[60] *Chang yu zhiyin xin zi dong*, p. 124.

[61] Ibid, pp. 222-4.

have already been fully and movingly expressed before. This enables what might be disillusioning by logical analysis to remain a credible illusion. It is a subtle technique, by which the play prevents itself from over-embellishing the emperor's image and keeps closer to historical authenticity, at the same time avoiding too unfavourable depictions that might damage both his characterisation and the integrity of the drama's theme. This device is a product of active artistic manipulation.

In logical parallel, the female part is also concerned with the moral conflict between fidelity and infidelity, as becomes much clearer if we consider this work in its position in the series of the plays based on the same subject matter. For example, in Bai Pu's *Rain on the Paulownia*, Lady Yang has an illicit affair with An Lushan, which, as Xu Shuofang says, is a complete negation of true love,[62] and in *"Forgotten Tales of the Celestial Treasure Period" Chant-fable* (*Tianbao yishi zhugongdiao*) by Wang Bocheng (fl. ca. 1279), her affair with him is nearly as passionate as that with the emperor.[63] The affairs in these plays highlight the prominence given to fidelity by the drama at present under discussion. Love in both *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala* exists not only in relative terms but as something absolute, as something consummate. Even if it is correct to see royal or imperial love as in reality only something relative and restricted, within the internal logic of these two plays it may rightfully be regarded as achieving true perfection. Perfection in human emotional matters is a philosophical notion rather than a feasibility, as love can but rarely approach such heights in practice, but in literature and the fine arts it can and often does eventually transcend mundane reality and disengage itself from ordinary social implications so as to entirely reveal its notional possibilities and realise its philosophical potential. Romantic love has two senses, a broad and a strict one. What is generally called "true love" in fact belongs to the former category, and is the one often portrayed in literature and the fine arts. Nevertheless most love matches in the mortal world apparently attain only relative perfection. The former is the typical mundane form, which is only a shadow of the latter category, but they are thus connected and this connection means that the concept of love retains a certain integrality. Literature and the fine arts can depict such wholeness of love because they are able to distil life's detail and enhance individuality in the direction of true love, elevating detailed particularity to comprehensive fullness and abstracting the individual as the universal, creating the extraordinary by such processes of conceptualisation. Such completeness as portrayed in literature and the fine arts is intrinsically a sublime perfection.

The foregoing analysis is corroborated by our two plays. By means of highly artistic extraction and typification, the love affairs in *Shakuntala* and *Palace of Eternal*

[62] See Xu Shuofang, "*Changsheng-dian*"-de zuozhe", op. cit., pp. 1-2.
[63] Ibid.

Life distinguish themselves from the common case of reality, which no doubt is precisely why the topic of love was warmly welcomed as subject matter by both playwrights and audiences alike. We stress again, fidelity in love coexists with equality, love's value being in relation to this coexistence, and one's assessment of love affairs taking this as its standard of judgement.

4

Related to *fidelity* is another concept, that of *constancy*. The two terms are of course sometimes close, even used as synonyms for each other, but they may usefully be differentiated for the sake of our analyses. In our definition, fidelity is very much concerned with reason and codes of morality, whereas constancy is the product of such things as passion, spontaneity, inclination, intuition and instinct. The distinction between the two largely corresponds to that between reason and feeling, conscious decision and instinctive reflex. Fidelity may exist without *passion*, being fuelled mainly by ethical forces and buttressed by institutionalised formalities, as often happens in the fidelity between couples, while constancy can exist without any perceptible reason or consciousness of tangible morality, because it is of nature and spontaneity.

Bearing the above in mind, our evaluation of fidelity is likely to have more readily available detail than that of constancy. Although fidelity is indispensable for true love, it is not in itself sufficient. In some senses, constancy deserves to be valued much higher than fidelity, since love relies on passion more than anything else. Passion is, in many cases, self-sufficient. It not only is what produces constancy, but also involves fidelity, because the "lie is the contrary to Passion".[1]

Coming back to our plays in particular, we see that fidelity does not consume much ink, while constancy and its corresponding passion are given prominence. In tight relation to this, the lyricism, which is a salient feature of Sanskrit drama and Chinese literature in general, and the amorous atmosphere of these plays are both concerned with the intuitive and instinctive side of the human psyche, in other words with passion and constancy.

Passion being in many ways self-sufficient, its opposites, rationality and fidelity, often have relative values and but a limited moralistic consistency, being dependent on the particular nature of the historical setting. Passion arises directly from human nature and has deep roots in it, and is characterised by more spark and vitality than other motivators.Romantic love to a large extent consists of, and moralised by, passion, which

[1] William Blake, "Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*", in *Blake: Complete writing with variant readings*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 74.

is why love can be regarded as an entity that is absolute through all Time.[65] Although human society has assumed many types, each of which has had its own moral codes and ethical norms, the nature of love is eternal. [66] Even though marriage systems have undergone countless changes, love has nearly always restricted itself to a certain few types, regardless of societal diversities and nuptial variations. Marriage might theoretically be abolished, and indeed in many parts of the world at many periods has not been considered essential or even relevant, but it is hard or impossible to imagine the abolition of love from human life under any conditions. [67] Passion is self-willed and self-contained, not always compatible with cool reasoning, and may go astray and become destructive, but may equally well beneficially break the bonds of outdated or otherwise faulty reasoning, crying out for better moral precepts or codes and even stimulating a new and better society. In seeming paradox, even on the surface apparently non-rational passion may embody rationality beyond that of existing conventional society or in advance of current norms.[68] Opposing currently standard rationales, it may be an inchoate form of a new-born and improved reasoning, updating what is stale and guiding society forward, without society's being aware of it. Passion brings a fair amount of intuition with it, and by its intuitive cutting through of complex phenomena can lead people directly back to the norms of human nature, to more fundamental, primeval, innocent and goodwilled simplicities. It is often this latent goodness and potential dramatic short-cutting that has made literature so keen on passionate love affairs, which have the potential to proffer more revelations than does didactic preaching.

It is a common feature of both plays that they both highlight passion and stress its self-generative and plenipotentiary qualities, and the belief in the value of these qualities constitutes what we might call, if we have to find an "ism", *passionism*[69]. Although *Palace of Eternal Life* is associated with historical events and state affairs, yet it remains primarily a personal romance rather than a politico-historical play, and such romantic

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[65] This point may be easily corroborated by literature and the arts, for instance, the folkloric subject matter of *Beauty and the Beast*.

[66] The eternality of love and the significance of sexuality was firmly denied by the ruling ideology in China twenty or so years ago, and people nowadays remain rather conservative in this respect.

[67] Even as an individual, life without love is still unimaginable. Some special type of people such as reclusive hermits are superficially indifferent to love, but that love or the need for it exists in their deep psyche can in no way be excluded.

[68] Summarising the Enlightenment ideas on the relationship between Nature and reason, Reinhold Niebuhr says: "These laws were regarded as fixed and inviolable as anything in nature; and therefore it equated 'reason' and 'nature' sometimes because it believed nature itself to be 'rational' and sometimes because it believed it to be subject to the rational control of man. It was only necessary for reason to discern the laws of nature to accomplish this object." See his *The Self and the Dramas of History* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., n.d., c. 1956), p. 133.

[69] Or *emotionalism* as has been used by scholars and accepted by dictionaries.

spirit with lyricism is partly due to the fashion of its times.[70] Here lies an important difference between *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Peach Blossom Fan* (*Taohua shan*) by Kong Shangren (1648-1718): although both mix love with political affairs, the former shows repercussions from the romantic wave of the later Ming dynasty, while the latter's intention is "to reflect the sad shadow of the lost country and miserable people, . . . and the righteousness of the hot-blooded female in the dust of mundane society"[71]. The former highlights the love between Emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang through their experience of political vicissitudes, rather than "writes of the feelings of societal vicissitudes through love and romantic encounters and separations."[72] So, some incidents in the second part of *Palace of Eternal Life* are aloof to the historical situation in order to sing of eternal love over life and death, while the story of the love between Fragrant Dame (Li Xiangjun) and Hou Fangyu in *Peach Blossom Fan* is unfolded "in close engagement with the broad historical situation at the junction of Ming and Qing."[73] Both plays are exceptionally passionate and emotional, even erotically so at times. Along with the lusty descriptions of passion that permeate the whole of the two plays, come clear manifestations of the playwrights' attitudes to it. As the depth of passion is unfolded by a convoluting series of reinforcing incidents, its importance is revealed both by the plots themselves and by logical inferences from the wider contents. It should especially be noted that the positive attitudes expressed by these means have far more force than would an ordinary plain moralistic comment or straightforward ethical sermon. By the coalition of direct logical induction and artistic techniques, such as the employment of beauty and sublimity with their aesthetic persuasions, and of vivid conceptual image and verbally conveyed scenic effects, all adding charm and fullness that greatly enhance the strength of the arguments, these attitudes are given extra eloquence and zest. This positive attitude towards passion is also revealed in a disarmingly unobtrusive fashion by the evolution of the events. That is to say, the authorial evaluation of passion is also achieved by stylistic means, as distinct from the case of the thematic element, and this produces a very different psychological effect on audience or readers. Instead of being faced with the sole choice of whether to accept forceful conclusions drawn by the author

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[70] That century witnessed the birth of many works of romantic spirit, such as *Mudan-ting*, *Jinping-mei*, *Sanyan*, *Erpai*, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, *Rouputuan*, and Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) advanced the theory of *xingling* promoting the emancipation of the individual. Concerning this David R. McCraw says: "Qing lyricists often appear to speak in a personal voice", and: "The lyric was considered a suitable medium for expressing tenderer, less elevated sentiments." See his *Chinese Lyricists of the Seventeenth Century* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. viii and 7.

[71] Taiwan Zhonghua Shuju Bianjibu, *Zhongguo wenxue fadashi* (Taipei: Zhonghua Shuju, 1967), p. 1010.

[72] Kong Shangren on his *Taohua-shan* (*Peach Blossom Fan*).

[73] You Guoen, *Zhongguo wenxueshi* (Peking: Remin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1964), p. 1058.

in an attempt to impose them directly on their reason, their feelings are subtly stirred and nurtured, with a gradual build-up of insights into the characters' passion, so that eventually, by theatrical empathy, the passions of playwrights, characters and audience all successfully converge and become identical.

Closely related to this, another striking feature shared by both works is that the solid emphasis on passion and constancy runs through the entire course of exposition of the subject matter, so that while passion in terms of dramaturgical structure provides impetus to the plot, in terms of thematic logicality it is the linking chain of the incidents.

4.1

An important association with passion in these plays is the concept of *love-at-first-sigh*, which in itself is an eloquent manifestation of the intuitive and instinctive facet of passionate love, and emphasises the decisive role played by passion. Love-at-first-sight is a widely used device in drama and literature, occurs frequently in real life all over the world and has a crucial function in our two dramas.

A striking similarity in this respect is, that in both plays hardly any explanation is given for why the lovers should have fallen in love or become lovers. It seems that in both love has been simplified into a primeval state of simplicity, by the deliberate temporary overlooking of any complicating cultural factors. Love of such kind is expressed in the form of intuitive passion, not cool, slow rationality. In literature, generally, if characters fall in love *at-first-sight* and the authors feel that there is not yet time and space for stating the reason which lies behind such a fierce and sudden dramatic development, explanations are often made later, retrospectively, either through prose commentary or by elucidating episodes. Our plays, however, seem an exception to this generalisation, and it appears that the lovers in them love for love's sake only, cause and effect being as one, and no further comment deemed necessary. This type of love-at-first-sight" might have appeared incredible, but such queries have been dispelled by a sort of mysticism and the mythological layout (in *Palace of Eternal Life*), and some primeval childishness, simplicity and naiveté (in *Shakuntala*). In fact, hardly any doubts would come into notion unless the analytical approach be employed.

Palace of Eternal Life consists of 50 acts, mostly concerned with love, but the matter from their falling in love to their first union as lovers occupies an incredibly small portion of the play. The actual time span of it is of the munimum, a couple of days only, but even such a short while is not dramatised, but only briefly mentioned, in Act Two:

> EMPEROR MINGHUANG. . . . Lately I am not so fully engaged with state administration, and indulge myself in pleasure. **Yesterday** I saw a court maid called Jade Bracelet, with the surname Yang. Her virtue and personality are tender and warm, and her

buxom figure is brimming with exquisiteness and beauty . Having chosen today by divination as an auspicious date, I am going to confer on her the title of Imperial Consort. . . . [74]

. . .

(Enter Gao and Lady Yang accompanied by two maids.)

. . .

LADY YANG. I am from a obscure family and lack grace and beauty, but, all the same, I have been chosen to be the Imperial Consort. The favour has just fallen on me, and I feel extremely nervous because I don't deserve it.

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Dearest, you are from a historically prestigious family, and you are virtuous and beautiful. I am extremely delighted to have you serve me as my consort.

LADY YANG. Long live my emperor!

GAO. Rise.

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Start the feast now! [75]

There is no growth of love consciousness. Their love is born mature. Nor are their any developments of love once their affair has begun, since the affair has been born perfect. Shortly afterwards, such perfection is highlighted in the following passage:

EMPEROR.

Over the sea-girt empire of thousands of leagues,
I have conscripted beauties to be my fair consorts.
But who deserves to lead the queue of court ladies?
Today Heaven blesses me with a beauty,
Who is indeed peerless in the world!
Just think!
I have presumptuously made her my favourite in the garnet palaces,
And let her be registered in the jade album,
Now thousands of fair ones have to give ground!
Let our love be as eternal as Earth and perpetual as Heaven. [76]

It might seem incredible that the plot moves so rapidly and that between initiation and incipient perfection, 'twixt bud and fruit, there is an utter blank. It is a very special type of love-at-first-sight: love taken for granted. There is no room for rationalisations, since passion is here sufficient unto itself, meaning everything.

Shakuntala belongs to the same type of love-at-first-sight, but appears different to *Palace of Eternal Life* in that the instant-long section of time during which love suddenly grows forth is amplified by the length of its description so that it can be depicted in full detail. As the play describes the king's mounting passion as he first sets eyes on Shakuntala, the picture is completed in a leisurely way, in prolonged theatrical time,

[74] My emboldenings.
[75] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
[76] Ibid, p. 4.

which tends to make one oblivious to the fact that the actual time of the incident is brief in the extreme:

> King.
>
> *A most just observation!*
> *This youthful form, whose bosom's swelling charms*
> *Like some fair bud close folded in its sheath,*
> *Gives not to view the blooming of its beauty.*
> . . .
>
> King. . . .
>
> *Her ruddy lip vies with the opening bud;*
> *Her graceful arms as the twinning stalks;*
> *And her whole form is radiant with the glow*
> *Of youthful beauty, as the tree with bloom.*
> . . .
> . . .
>
> King. . . . Would my union with her were permissible! and yet I hardly dare hope that the maiden is sprung from a caste different from that of the Head of the hermitage. . . .[77]

The theatrical performance time of the whole passage would be much longer than the time envisaged by the plot for the event of his falling in love with her, that is to say, time has been amplified. Love and passion germinate, ferment and mature in such a short moment, but once matured really endure forever, the oblivion occasioned by the supernatural not counting.

On the heroine's side, the situation is very similar. Shakuntala's reactions are as typical of love-at-first-sight as are the king's:

> (All look at the King, and are embarrassed.)
> . . .
> King (turning to Shakuntala). I trust all is well with your devotional rites?
> . . .
> Shakuntala (aside). How is it that the sight of this man has made me sensible of emotions and inconsistent with religious vows?. . .[78]

In contrast to *Palace of Eternal Life*, the realisation of their love is vividly dramatised. In Act Three, each is afflicted with agony caused by their lovesick yearnings for each other, the passion of both having been kindled into such a flame that it has created a life-or-death situation:

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[77] Ibid, p. 27-8.
[78] Ibid, p. 29-30.

King. . . . God of Love of the flowery shafts! we are all of us cruelly deceived by thee, and by the Moon, however deserving of confidence you may both appear.

For not to us do these thine arrows seem
Poisoned with tender flowerets; not to us
Doth the pale moon irradiate the earth
With beams of silver fraught with cooling dews: --
But on our fevered frames the moon-beams fall
Like darts of fire, and every flower-tipped shaft
Of Kama, as it probes our throbbing hearts,
Seems to be barbed with hardest adamant. [79]

Simultaneously, Shakuntala has been suffering such love longings that it leads to her physical affliction:

Anasuya. . . . Tell us frankly what is the cause of your disorder. It is useless to apply a remedy, until the disease be understood.

. . .

Shakuntala. I am, indeed, deeply in love; but can not rashly disclose my passion to those young girls.

Priyamvada. What Anasuya says, dear Shakuntala, is very just. Why give so little heed to your ailment? Every day you are becoming thinner; . . .

King. Priyamvada speaks most truly.

Sunk is her velvet cheek; her wasted bosom
Loses its fullness; e'en her slender waist
Grows more attenuate; her face is wan,
Her shoulders droop; -- as when the vernal blasts
Sear the young blossoms of the Madhavi,
Blighting their bloom so mournful is the change,
Yet in its sadness, fascinating still,
Inflicted by the mighty lord of love
On the fair figure of the hermit's daughter. [80]

So far we have just delineated the features of love-at-first-sight, but such love is not principally a technical means of arranging incidents and organising the plot, being, more significantly, a means to display the true power and impact of passion. Not at all rare in Chinese drama, few if any Chinese playwrights object to it, and it is often, if not always, used to create a fine romance or initiate the path that leads to a happy ending. In Chinese drama, love-at-first-sight even takes place in the arranged marriage. Although, in such arranged marriages, man and woman are paired by external forces, their parents and the matchmakers, as a "blind date", the *first sight* of each other may still produce such a powerful affinity that both parties not only fall in love immediately, but also have a long-lasting and deeply emotional attachment to each other and eventually reach romantic

[79] Ibid, Act 3, p. 48.
[80] Ibid, Act 4, p. 51.

perfection in their relationship. The arranged marriage might in this respect make claims for its rehabilitation in both Chinese drama and Chinese society.

One of the causes for the popularity of love-at-first-sight as a dramatic type is that the ruling morality and orthodox ideology have in many ways been against emotional vitality and romantic impulse, so that passion as opposed to rationality has played the role of a champion against social oppression. True to their passion, lovers may easily forget conventional ethical scruples. This can partly explain why in a large number of Chinese dramatic works, the morality of sexuality is amazingly loose and tolerant, a fact which may well amaze those who groundlessly imagine that traditional China, blanket-condemned by some as "feudal", must have been extremely prudish.[81] It also explains why most Chinese love plays have a light touch and are instilled with a rich sense of humour, since when the lovers behave without "due" regard to the prescribed social codes and ethical mores, a comical conflict with those codes and mores arises, by which the prevailing morality is put in a laughable light. This analysis serves to sharply reveal the linkage of love-at-first-sight with the comicality of Chinese love plays, something widely present but unconsciously taken for granted.

The yet fuller significance of love-at-first-sight in these two dramas cannot be wholly revealed until it has been identified more closely as related to the matter of passion. In this respect, love-at-first-sight is not chiefly a technical cliché of plot structure or a stereotype of incidents' layout, but provides an eloquent explanation of the protagonists' constancy; or, put alternatively, it is the inherent logical foundation for the ensuing necessity of the train of dramatic events, such as their love-intoxication's lasting through life and death. In life, love-at-first-sight may be condemned as frivolous, and as a dramatic incident it may be accused of lack of philosophical profundity. Such attacks, however, are simply based on arbitrary opinion. In actual fact, the tendencies to it are not frivolous, but rooted deeply in our human nature and deep psyche, and it is pregnant with further implications, potentially conveying signals of mighty significance.

Love-at-first-sight occupies proportionately different coverage in each play, but holds an important position in both. Such cursory treatment of the episode of the

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[81] This point may be fully realised by some Westerners and even causes aversion, as Daniel Reid says: "Western readers often have trouble accepting traditional Chinese attitudes toward sex due to their own moral biases on the subject, instilled by thousands of years of Judeo-Christian sexual taboos. But the Chinese, even today, find Western attitudes toward sex equally baffling and highly hypocritical. The fact remains, the Chinese views sex as a basic human function similar to eating, sleeping, and so forth, and they cultivate it as an art and a pleasure, as well as an adjunct to health and longevity. And ultimately, the Taoist way of sex enhances both the health and happiness of both partners, regardless of the social and historical background." "The Tao of Sex", in his *The Tao of Health, Sex and Longevity: A modern, practical approach to the ancient way* (London, Sydney, etc.: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 273.

protagonists' falling in love as *Palace of Eternal Life* provides, suggests not that love-at-first-sight is unimportant but that it is such a common matter that it has been taken for granted and that it has been felt,therefore no detailed narration or elaborate interpretation is needed, while in *Shakuntala* the vivid descriptions and the exhaustive psychological analysis clearly display the value accorded to love-at-first-sight.

Shakuntala gives a primary importance to the king's love-at-first-sight, and the matter is presented in three "tides". In the first of these, the king may even be said to have fallen in love before first sight, since on reaching the hermitage where Shakuntala lives, he feels his arm throbbing, this being taken as a good omen which portends the ensuing romantic incidents. This episode obviously makes the plot supernaturally more intriguing, but more importantly, it paves a way for the dramatic pattern of love-at-first-sight thatensues. By such a supernatural element, the play implies that their love is predestined, thus inferring the ordained necessity of their love affair, and once this necessity has been broached, any querying of the correctness of their love becomes out of the question.

The second "tide" is the high-water of love-at-first-sight on a realistic dimension, as touched upon earlier.

The third "tide", a highly meaningful one, surging under the impetus of the previous one, occurs when Shakuntala arrives at the royal court. The king has lost all remembrance of her and is completely oblivious of his previous ardour and hasty marriage to her, so he denies his relationship with her and disowns her as a total stranger. It is just at this point, however, that love-at-first-sight starts up for the third time. Once he sees Shakuntala, even hidden beneath her veil, the king's calm of mind is violently disturbed and his desires incited:

> King (looking at Shakuntala). But the lady there --
> *Who can she be, whose form of matchless grace*
> *Is half concealed beneath her flowing veil?*
> *Among the somber hermits she appears*
> *Like a fresh bud 'mid sere and yellow leaves.*[82]
>
> . . .
> (Removes her veil.)
> King (gazing at Shakuntala. Aside). What charms are here revealed before mine eyes!
> *Truly no blemish mars the symmetry*
> *Of that fair form; yet can I ne'er believe*
> *She is my wedded wife; and like a bee*
> *That circles round the flower whose nectared cup*
> *Teems with the dew of morning, I must pause*

[82] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 5, p. 79.

Ere eagerly I taste the proffered sweetness. [83]

. . .

King.

The moon expands the lotus of the night,
The rising sun awakes the lily; each
Is with his own contented. Even so
The virtuous man is master of his passions,
And from another's wife averts his gaze. [84]

By now love-at-first-sight has been underlined thrice, and the necessity of psychological logic is sufficiently demonstrated and the trend of plot prescribed. The essence of love-at-first-sight lies in the ***first sight***, upon which fresh spontaneity and the energy of innocence are straightway given their head. Dependent on intuition and spontaneity, such love may well be more reliable than deliberation and scrupulousness, for although it is instant, it is, all-importantly, not instantaneous in its origins or consequences, not being the mere product of childish simplicity, but rather that flash of matured insight into love as a combination of mind and body, of cultural sophistication and natural naiveté. Its haste could well result in calamity, but more often than not, in drama and possibly in life, it ends well and rounds off harmoniously, since it has its own deep-running rationale. This assessment is corroborated by both plays.

4. 2

We note again that constancy is to passion is as fidelity is to morality. In view of this, constancy is spontaneous, intuitive and instinctive, and it is in this sense that love may be paraphrased as romantic passion, being of natural inclination and prescribed by Nature. Love-at-first-sight is at its flash-point a sensuous phenomenon occasioned by the impulses of Nature and human nature, as explicitly stated in both plays, and has the function of the initial step in the course of constancy.

In *Palace of Eternal Life*, constancy outlasts the present mortal life and, in Buddhist terms, any future mortal life, and extends its duration through the human world, the Netherworld, the realm of immortality, Heaven, and the Tridivia, and indeed, in order to form a three-phase-pattern of *previous life*, *present life* and *future life*, the play even goes so far as to trace it back to the protagonists' prior existences.

The lovers' previous life is implicit in the play, and it is left rather ambiguous as to whether their nuptial fate has been predestined. Although the text has no lack of such

[83] Ibid., Act 5, p. 81.
[84] Ibid., Act 5, p. 85.

words as "predestination", yet these are basically metaphorical, being conventional phrases employed wherever love is concerned rather than meant literally. All the same, there are still many hints which spur the imagination in such directions, making it very likely that they have loved in their previous life as immortals. It is a very common matter in Chinese folklore, legend and mythology that immortals fall in love and are banished from heaven down to the earth to live there as human beings. They continue their romance in the world of mankind, this often being the starting point of the onstage plot. Their prior romantic convolution is reviewed in the course of the plot's unfolding, and generally their immortal status is eventually regained and their harmonious love renewed, "happily ever after". Against such a cultural background, the audience might well fill in the blank with their imagination. By the end of the play, the two lovers' previous life is at last openly revealed as the plot approaches its crescendo. Emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang are reunited in the Moon Palace and their love is approved by the Jade Emperor (Yudi), the supreme ruler of the universe, who then issues his edict:

> *Li Longji and his Imperial Consort Jade Bracelet:*
>
> *Originally, you two were respectively the Super-Genuine-Man*[85] *and the Penglai Nymph, but it was deemed proper that you spend a time in the human world because of some aberrations on your part*[86]*. Now your banishment is over and the plea on your behalf from the Weaving Damsel is hereby approved. Taking your constancy into account, we declare that you are permitted to live in the Tridivia, the highest heaven, as an eternal couple.*
>
> *This decree comes into effect from the time of its issue.*[87]

This too is in harmony with a common convention of Chinese legend.

4. 3

Such a three-phase pattern is not purely a formative mould in which to cast incidents, but has a far-reaching significance and hidden connections with other aspects of culture. First of all, it accords with the specifically Buddhist or general Chinese religious theory of the three lives. Secondly, it echoes the ideas of Chinese folklore. Lastly and most importantly, it complies with a regular philosophical progression, the three phases corresponding respectively to thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which is why the love in the previous life is hardly referred to in this play until after the love in the afterlife has been attained, since only with the advent of this latter circumstance can the outline of the three-phase pattern be exposed with true lucidity.

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[85] *Kongsheng zhenren.*

[86] It is highly implicit of romantic vicissitudes, which are considered a moral aberration for immortals.

[87] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 50, p. 221.

In the first phase, love emerges as the motif. The second phase is a negation of the initial one, and in it the motif is struggling against negative forces, this struggle paving the way for the next phase. By the last phase, love has undergone the tempering of rigorous trials and ordeals and at last disengages itself from the conflict, winning back the upperhand in the argument. Love is regained, approved and affirmed. Such a triad is also reflected in the play's literary structure, the first phase being briefly depicted and serving as a potential prologue[88], not occupying any substantial proportion of the plot, the second having the largest coverage and functioning as the main body of the text, and the last phase being as brief as the first. The middle phase serves as the milieu for the dramatic conflict to develop in, and is the richest in subject-matter, since the playwright really values the present, mortal life most, irrespective of whatever religious and philosophical preferences he expresses for afterlife or previous life, and the tension concerning which of the three phases is to be preferred has considerable philosophical import.[89]

Why does this play so deliberately infer love in a previous life? The first reason is that, by so doing, the power of Nature and human nature is given great prominence. When the action enters the supernatural dimension, their thematic essence, however, remains firmly rooted in ordinary mortal reality. In this respect, the supernatural is but a variation on the natural world and human society, being an organic extension and combination of Nature and human nature. From an aesthetic point of view, it has the advantage that it can attain to greater truth and perfection than ordinary reality, the supernatural being an artistic creation by which necessity is accounted for as predestination and the natural law of the cosmos is interpreted as fate's prescription. Love in this situation becomes an absolute entity which is beyond any doubting, and, being absolute, love is unconditionally justified, as it has transcended ordinary rationality and draws its validation from natural law and the makeup of the human psyche. In the realm of the supernatural, Nature and human nature can be combined and rendered sublime, this power for perfect combination and sublimation standing in conspicuous contrast to the imperfect expedients of mankind's ordinary social ethics and moralisations.

The second reason for this play's insistence on love in a previous life is its wish to form a circularity for the three-phase pattern, in order to demonstrate both the logical consistency and passion-fuelled constancy of the protagonists' love. The circle is created in terms of dramatic structure, bringing about an artistic perfection from which the

[88] A thematic and ideological prologue rather than formative and structural one.

[89] This is echoed by the dramaturgical phenomenon that conflict (which mirrors the contradiction) is most vital for drama.

audience gains an aesthetic contentment, while in terms of content, it makes the subject matter more rhythmic, enables the application of more layers of colour to the theme, and helps clarify the background against which the ensuing dramatic conflict will take place. Each phase is a severe ordeal for love, and the more phases the lovers go through, the higher level their love reaches. Undergoing these three phases, love achieves full growth and completes its journey by returning to its starting point, by which circular process love is amply proven to be constant.

No clue to the protagonists' love in their previous life is detected in *Shakuntala*. In contradistinction to *Palace of the Eternal Life*, its plot begins directly on the realistic level, providing neither the backdrop of latency for discussions of, nor any actual prelude to imply or indicate, their previous life. Furthermore, no room is even left for such an imagination or assumption about previous life as can early be made in the Chinese play. All the same, there is a similarity and it lies in the play's none the less likewise stressing the power of Nature and human nature, paralleling its Chinese counterpart in this respect.

Like the situation in *Palace of Eternal Life*, love-at-first-sight in *Shakuntala* would give the audience a strongly fatalistic feeling that the protagonists' romantic affair is of inevitability, being neither the child of coincidence nor of free will, but of predestination and a kind of only vaguely defined non-human force, similar to what is felt in *Palace of Eternal Life*. Two niceties of the lovers' first meeting deserve attention. Firstly, before he has ever seen Shakuntala, the king feels the love-omen of a throbbing in his arm, as mentioned above, and secondly, once Shakuntala has set eyes on him, it makes her "sensible of emotions inconsistent with religious vows"[90]. The first instance is in semi-supernatural vein, and the second clearly shows spontaneous natural or instinctive reaction as opposed to the calculating precepts of such general cultural and social forces as religion. This highlights the question of predestiny or choice, which both plays approach in the same way.

In addition to the foregoing cases, *Shakuntala* gives much space to the depiction of the spontaneous attraction and natural inclination between man and woman, as plentifully indicated by the examples above. On the one hand there is the extreme of feminine beauty, on the other that of masculine charm, and we are invited to perceive the irresistible natural affinity between the paragons of the two sexes, as in some of the following dialogues:

Madhavya. . . .

[90] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 1, p. 30.

She must indeed throw all other beauties into the shade. [91]

King.

This peerless maid is like a fragrant flower,
Whose perfumed breath has never been diffused;
A tender bud, that no profaning hand
Has dared to sever from its parent stalk;
A gem of priceless water, just released
Pure and unblemished from its flittering bed.
Or may the maiden haply be compared
To sweetest honey, that on mortal lip
Has sipped, or, rather to their mellowed fruit
Of virtuous actions in some former birth,
Now brought to full perfection? [92]

Correspondingly, the king is portrayed as follows:

General.

Like the majestic elephant that roams
O'er mountain wilds, so does the King display
A stalwart frame, instinct with vigorous life.
His brawny arms and manly chest are scored
By frequent passage of the sounding string;
Unharmed he bears the mid-day sun; no toil
His mighty spirit daunts; his sturdy limbs,
Stripped of redundant flesh, relinquish nought
Of their robust proportions, but appear
In muscle, nerve, and sinewy fiber cased. [93]

On other occasions, his virtue, intelligence and ability are mentioned, and thus a composite image of a brilliant and handsome male is achieved, the magnetism of his maleness being ultra clear from the preceding quote alone.

From the descriptions above emerges a criterion for match-making: the match must be between beautieus woman and stalwartman, which corresponds, with vital differences, to the ubiquitous match between talented scholar-youth and fair lady (*caizi jiaren*) of traditional Chinese drama in general and its variation in *Palace of Eternal Life* in particular. Both these pairings serve widely as reliable, sturdy moulds in which to cast principal characters in love literature, especially in drama. The difference in our present comparisons is that Shakuntala lived in a distant heroic period and in India, so that for

[91] Ibid., Act 2, p. 41.
[92] Ibid., Act 2, p. 41.
[93] Ibid., Act 2, pp. 38-9.

her the ideal male image is warrior, the king in this play being little different to a warrior hero, while Chinese drama, however, came into being at a much later time and against a background of a more maturely humanistic civilisation and culture, in which the emphasis in the ideal male image was on scholarly intellect and cultural finesse. Even though the male lead in *Palace of Eternal Life* is a monarch, his image still bears much affinity with the typical young scholar hero (for instance, he is highly talented in music). Both the Indian king and the Chinese emperor are rulers at the apex of their societies, but the difference between them is clarified when we trace back their images to the wider relevant archetypes of their hero roles, those of the doughty warrior and the scholar genius.

There is nothing accidental or exceptional in the broad features of the chief characters in *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala*, which have deep roots in their respective dramatic traditions. The talented scholar and beautiful lady type of match prevailing in ancient Chinese theatre still exerts strong and direct influence on contemporary drama in the traditional style. Notwithstanding that the lovers in it may and do vary in social status, cultural qualification, family background, disposition, personality and so on, the female rarely, if ever, loses her natural blessing of beauty and grace,[94] while the male normally derives his genius from a mixture of inborn nature and intelligence acquired by hard effort. This dramatic type corresponds to the expectations of social norms and criteria, and even the particularities of this characterisation tend to be artistically generalised. Although, on the surface, Lady Yang and the emperor do not entirely fit this type, their underlying correspondence to it can in no way be denied. Once such a cultural context is taken into account, it becomes obvious that such a pair is a just derivation with variation of the "beautiful lady and talented scholar" type. An equally profound influence from the cultural background can be discerned for *Shakuntala*. In *nataka*, the most important Sanskrit dramatic form, the hero "should always be an honourable or highly placed personality, a king, a demi-god or a god", and in Sanskrit drama generally, "the hero or the lover is mostly young and handsome, refined and endowed with all good qualities, but he is always ardently loved as well. The heroine is always beautiful and full of love, but of different types, who is either the wife of the hero or a different woman or harlot."[95] In a long course of natural selection and cultural evolution, involving spontaneous developments and deliberate choices, such types of match were eventually accepted as a taken-for-granted legacy and became the fixed

[94] *Tiansheng lizhi*, as Bai Juyi said in his masterpiece *Song of Eternal Regret*, which shares the same subject matter as our play, *Palace of Eternal Life*.

[95] M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, vol. 3, part 1, translated by Subhadra Hja from the German with additions (New Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963), p. 185.

standard, imprinting themselves deeply into both conscious attitudes and the collective sub-consciousness of the nations and civilisations concerned. The reason for the acceptance of such criteria is simple. They comply with human nature and reflect the principles of natural law. In a way, they are the outcome of natural processing.

We must further point out that the national consciousness revealed in this dramatic cliché has been inseparably combined with stylistic factors. The fixed role-categories, a special characteristic of Eastern dramas, used in training actors and actresses have corresponded closely with these conventionalised stable and enduring stereotypings. In Chinese plays, the main characters are normally played by performers who have specialised in certain role-categories (*juese*), the protagonists of love plays for instance at various periods, say, in the Yuan dynasty,being played by the role-categories called "female lead" (*zhengdan)*, "male lead" (*zhengmo*), "young male lead" (*sheng*) and so forth.[96] Such affinity between characters and the role-categories of training also exists in Sanskrit drama. For instance, *satrudhara* is the term for a role-category actor who plays the hero, and the role-category of the joker is called *vidusaka.*

Such stereotypings might be objected to by some modern audiences or members of audiences, and easily accused by radically modernistic critics of lacking originality and individual creative flair, considered as some stylistic monotone and ossified formulary. No matter how eloquent such detractors might sound, they would be overlooking the vital point that such patterns have not in the main been adopted by the playwrights through their own random (or lazy) free will, but have been necessitated by the objective realities that they embody, representing as they have publicly accepted standards for perfect love and ideal marriage. As for the standardisation they present, it has not been just the established social requirements it might appear, but also a measure and norm imposed by Nature and human nature. Dramaturgically *de rigueur* on the one hand, it has also reflected natural regulation and natural selection on the other. The magnetic attraction between such types of men and women has had a profound psychological foundation, which to a large extent conditioned the sexual behaviour of Chinese people

[96] Peking Opera-drama has much further specified this kind of terminology, for example, *huadan* (meaning flowery female lead) refers to the role of the spirited, lively or even flirtatious young girls, *qingyi* (literally meaning green dress) to that of married young ladies who are more serious and demure, *laosheng* (mature male or senior male) or *xusheng* (bearded male) to the serious and decent gentlemen regardless of their age groups, *xiaosheng* (young male or junior male) to young stylish men, *wusheng* (martial male) or *hongsheng* (red male) or *honglian* (blushed face) to warriors, *hualian* (painted face) or *heisheng* (dark male) or *heitou* (black head) to the stalwart and stout men with correspondingly powerful personality, *laodan* (senior female) to elderly ladies, *chou* (clown) to comical roles, and so on. Some roles can be further categorised, for instance, *wudan* (martial female) or *daomadan* (female with sword on horse) refers to woman soldiers, *chou* can classified into *wenchou* (gentle clown) and *wuchou* (martial clown), and *hualian* into jiazi-hualian (posture stalwart man) and *tongchui hualian* (stalwart man with bronze hammers), and so forth.

in the old society, so that such romance onstage has been a reflection of widespread love reality and widespread real love-aspirations. As a type, it is characterised by seemingly trivial traits, but as a standard it presents a real ideal that has its own strong justifications. There is nothing essentially wrong in such use of types, and blanket attacks on it are certainly mistaken, since types may convey truths important as any other solidly logical concept, by reflecting and typifying life itself, and by a process of distillation involved in the process helping to intensify the clarification and systematic consideration of otherwise confused and confusing issues. There are indeed certain possible limitations in the use of these stereotypings, but they have always been used by the best dramatists as a basis for creative freedom, the practice being concerned with commonality but in no way necessarily inimical to individuality. It does not matter so much what type the protagonists belong to, as how they behave overall, in the plot and in the finer characterisation and stage interactions, on the basis of that type.

Such standards did not vanish along with the lapse of their historical period, those heroic and colourful eras of olden times, but have been adapted and transformed in ways that make them still applicable to modern life, still serving to provide subtle revelations of the realm of Eros. Even nowadays, the ideal sex image of the male still in general requires the two qualities of virility and intelligence, while the ideal image of the female relies very much on visual or formal beauty. Regardless of whether such a division is fair and reasonable, or whether it should and will be changed or rectified, or even is being changed, it remains at present an undoubted plain fact. As long as man and woman stay as they have long been evolved by Nature, their sexual qualities will surely in general be stipulated by that aspect of cosmic Nature that we call human nature.

From this it is understandable that both plays lay emphasis on the age-old natural side of love and sexuality. Nature and human nature provide both physical and psychological foundations for sexual contrasts and inclinations, and underpin the cultural norms for love, not only deciding the broad general frameworks of how lovers interact with each other but also their social behaviour. Since such norms are based on long-term nature, they have enduring influence and an apparently absolute validity, this giving them an ever-fresh vitality which has always rejected value-judgments based on out-dated or otherwise warped ethical outlooks. This view may find its straight and simple affirmation from the fact that our present discussion is able, and needs, to leap across vast time and space, spanning the immense geographical distance between India and China, and the extensive period from ancient times of warrior heroism to the recent past, and still discover much common ground.

4. 4

Constancy is indeed, as stressed before, mainly due to passion and intuition and opposed to calm conscious rationalisation and moralisation, but nonetheless, the immediately preceding analyses disclose a hidden and special logical chain linking these two opposite groupings. Constancy is based on Nature and human nature, so it is, after all, to be seen as absolutely rational in the highest sense of what humans can determine as reason. By such absoluteness it is potentially able to fend off all arguments and attacks from such relativities as temporally, culturally or societally bound ethics and codes of behaviour, being holistic and internally consistent, self-contained and self-sufficient. For this very reason constancy itself bears such a strong mark of morality about it, being powerfully demanded by Nature and human nature, as something that humans should and must aspire to.

Although on many occasions we may not be fully aware of such implications, this logicality still exercises its power upon our intuitive subconscious, producing a psychological effect that is a compromise with cooler rationalised inductions. The moral aura of constancy is illustrated by a simple fact. In ordinary mortal life, whether their love is deemed ethically right or wrong, and whether it is partly a result of deliberate reasoning or wholly of apparently random infatuation, if only the lovers remain passionately constant to each other, they tend to gain public sympathy and are considered to be in the right, even though in reality they may be merely obsessive, obstinate or misguided in sober terms. In literature and the fine arts, love affairs without specific moral groundings in common sense are still held commendable, and even those involving crime, violence, fornication, adultery and so on may still win the admiration of audiences who strongly condemn such transgressions in real life.[97] It is in constancy that the key to this mystery lies. Firstly, constancy, being analogous to fidelity, radiates a general feel of spiritual perseverance to precepts, which tends to create an aura of morality. Secondly, constancy, being along the same notional lines as the concepts of durability and perpetuity, by this sheer association with durability is readily felt to transcend the merely momentary and by implication trivial, fickle and commonplace, thus to rise towards sublimity. Desire that is but of the moment and licentious sexuality heedless of the morrow, are rarely if ever admired by people with a deep sense of morality and social responsibility. In both our plays, it is constancy that would most strongly move the audience and arouse its abundant sympathy, and the playwrights were fully conscious of this point.

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[97] For instance, in Chinese fox stories by Pu Songling (1630-1715), what appeals to the readers is constancy and passion, and, similarly, the charm and power in the typical folkloric story of *Beauty and the Beast* rely on the concept of constancy as well.

In as much as we can place our instincts and natural desires under the control of our rational consciousness, we are masters of nature, but at the same time that makes us slaves to our conscious rationality. Such socially conditioned and thus relativistic rationality may only be valid for its particular social and historical confines. Nature and human nature, however, seem not bound by time and space, and their apparent absoluteness, implying absolute validity, is ever beckoning for our compliance to them.

When conditioned rationality has lost what social or historical correctness it may have had, it does not necessarily lose its power, out-dated or otherwise inappropriate systems of reasoning not necessarily quitting the stage before the entry of a new reasoning more suited to new times, or the re-entry of a reasoning that has more eternal applicability. This accounts for why so terribly many "contra-natural", perverse, things, contrary to Nature and human nature, have occurred in history and still continue to occur in the present times, and why human beings who are so proud of their rationality could so often have done the most immoral and cruel deeds imaginable, beyond the ken of other, supposedly unreasoning animals.[98] When reasoning is in conflict with Nature and human nature, people may lose their natural conditioning and restraints, and give themselves to cruel havocs and holocausts. Such phenomena can be referred to as *alienation*, the perpetrators having become alienated from their inherent inner and cosmic roots, assuming the cosmos is a benevolent system. At various times societies have tried to tackle the problems of alienation head-on, as in attempts fashionable in some communist countries after the last world war and again in post-Cultural Revolution days, when the theory of alienation was retrieved to try and explain the ultra anti-humanitarianism of the proceding period and its continued repercussions.[99] Nor is discussion lacking in the West concerning the alienation occasioned by the harsher side of industrial, technological and economic developments. All such debates affirm the enduring prerogative of natural law.

When natural law finds its way into human psychology, it is termable "intuition". True intuition functions as the spontaneous echo of natural law, the pristine embodiment

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[98] For example, animals do not commonly kill a member of their own species, while two World Wars have happened within a short period, not to mention frequent genocide in the past and constant warfare at present.

[99] The exploration and interpretation of the theory of alienation, along with that of humanism, was soon resolutely suppressed by the authorities, since they insinuated a critical attitute toward the regime. Cf. Ruan Ming, *Lishi zhuanzhedian-shang-de Hu Yaobang* (River Edge [USA]: Global Publishing Co. Inc., n.d., [c. 1990]), chs. 10 & 11. And Richard N. Hunt also says: "His [man's] species-life appears as an alienation, as a projection upon something external -- namely the modern state. As an alien power this state is most clearly recognizable in its monarchical form, as the king, the Lord Jehovah, before whose authority men must bow down and humble themselves." Richard N. Hunt, "The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels", vol. 1, *Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy: 1818-1850* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.), p. 71.

of the rationality of Nature, which is why it is ever-present at least as a hidden influence on our thinking. On many occasions, where it clashes with conscious rationalisations, it is more reliable than them, and this is so precisely because it is in unseen but inseparable communion with Nature, Nature itself being a system of secure internal and, as far as we can tell, absolute, rationality.[100] Thus intuition is the more direct reflection of great truth by its tight linkage to Nature, and for love and sexual relationships, being at their highest attuned to the very stuff of existence's underlying principles, intuition, with its depth and long-term validities, is of greater importance than time- and space-conditioned rationalities. In speaking of instances of love, we often encounter the seeming impossibility of explaining its motivations and purposes, and may feel that it is impossible to account for them, hence the prevalence of the saying "love is blind". This explains the oft-mooted apparent wall between love and reason, which in fact is no more than an antagonism between eternal Nature and a particular society or products of that society.

Since Nature functions more vitally than rationality in the kingdom of love, beautiful romance owes much more to spontaneous inclinations rather than to calculated deliberation, and perfection in love seems dependent on natural blessings rather than on painstaking effort. It is Nature that sets romance on fire and keeps the flame of constancy between lovers alight.

By underlining the inherent connections between Nature, intuition, passion and constancy, the importance of constant love in both plays is partly explained. As long as this logical line of connection remains intact, the protagonists' constant love remains consistent and credible. Another resemblance between the two dramas in this respect is that they both by extending constancy beyond mortal life, further consolidate and boost its vital significance and dramaturgic impact.

4. 5

Yet, in both, constancy does not go unchallenged, and its path is not uniformly smooth. Love affairs in the realistic dimension, that of the present this-worldly life, are broken off halfway through each plot. In *Palace of Eternal Life*, Lady Yang dies in Act Twenty-five, this alone rendering the second part of the play more strikingly touching. Although the design of *Shakuntala* includes no such fatal incident, Shakuntala too no

[100] Cf. Herbert Marcuse: "This transformation of the libido would be the result of a societal transformation that released the free play of individual needs and faculties." And: "We have spoken of the *self-sublimation of sexuality*. The term implies that sexuality can, under specific conditions, create highly civilized human relations without being subjected to the repressive organization which the established civilization has imposed upon the instinct. Such self-sublimation presupposes historical progress beyond the institutions of the performance principle, which in turn would release instinctual regression." See "The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros", in his *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 202.

longer dwells in the world as a mortal once she has been disowned by the king. In both cases this constitutes a *de facto* temporary abnegation of constancy, and reacts against the general momentum of the dramas' themes, heroines being repudiated, pledges being utterly broken, and passion diluted or dissipated. Constancy, in short, undergoing a brief but notable destruction.

Such a negation is, in the first place, a reflection or extract of the historical truth that females involved in courtly affairs are more often than not viewable as victims, owing, as we have suggested above, to the combination of the traditional convention of patriarchal dominance over women and the monarch's absolute power over his subjects. In *Palace of Eternal Life*, besides the occasion when the mutinous troops demand that Lady Yang die and the emperor is eventually forced to order her to committ suicide,[101] the constancy of their relationship has twice before been endangered. The first conflict takes place in Act Six, entitled "The Outsiders' Query", Act Seven, "A Casual Intimacy", Act Eight, "Presenting Her Hair", and Act Nine, "Calling her back", which delineate the tortuous path and vicissitudes of their love. The emperor favours the Duchess of Guo in Act Five, and has a casual romance with her in Act Seven, thus arousing, as first seen in Act Six, Lady Yang's jealousy and causing disharmony between the lovers. Banished from the court for her jealousy, on her way back home, taking up the suggestion of the chief eunuch, she in Act Eight sends a lock of her hair to the emperor, as a token to remind him of their happy hours together of old. At the same time, in her absence the emperor is afflicted by the ravages of *maladie d'amour* for her, and so also takes the eunuch's advice and recalls her, whereupon they fall again into a love as deep as before.

The second conflict takes place in Acts Eighteen, "A Night Grief", and Nineteen, "Restored Harmony", when Lady Yang is distressed by the rumour that the emperor has slept with the previously long abandoned Lady Plum Blossom, and takes action as described earlier. The third conflict reaches its height of intensity in Act Twenty-five, "Ruination of the Beauty", when the emperor sacrifices love in the interests of the survival and stability of his state.

The plot deture determined by these three episodes constitutes a locus in the literature of the maltreatment of women, and the artistic presentation of them is corroborated by a number of historical accounts. While lauding their fidelity and constancy, Hong Sheng did not forget or ignore the decidedly dark side of sexual relationships in the court, and in seeking to reflect the reality of them, he did indeed hit on the essence of their nature.

[101] This scene is directly based on historical fact.

Secondly but more importantly, negating constancy is a negative preparation for the advent of the attitude of constancy in its truest sense, or alternatively is a "suppression" that heralds a soaring, or an ebb that announces the forth-coming high tide. This device is applied both to structural form and to theme. In stylistic terms, the alternation of the ups with the downs create a rhythm in the plot that satisfies the natural psychological demands of the audience's aesthetic expectations. It also gives the plot a variety. This variety is eventually replaced by a certain uniformity when the plot has passed through all the diversities and arrives at its destination of constancy, by which time, however, the plot has ceased to move in a spiral, having completed its circle, and this circle by its very perfection satisfies a natural need in the audience. In the dialectical thesis of aesthetics, uniformity embodies variety, while variety strains towards uniformity.[102]

Nonetheless, such a stylistic arrangement does not primarily result from artistic design but from thematic considerations. By the same dialectical precept, negation admittedly opposes affirmation, but also calls for re-affirmation on the higher plane. It is herein that there lies a far more important intention and deeper reason. The concept of constancy stands against licentiousness, and in this light, licentiousness is not only its opposite, but also a referential object; that is to say, constancy can not be fully interpreted unless its opposite is referred to. This view can be accounted for in both spatial and temporal perspectives. In the first perspective, a couple of contrasting points remain at rest, while in the latter a developing history exists in motion that reveals more interpretative sophistication.

A similar situation is found in *Shakuntala*. At the very beginning of Act Five comes melancholy singing by a queen who has lost the king's favour: "How often hither didst thou rove," etc.,[103] followed by the king's statement: "She means to reprove me, because I once paid her great attention, and have lately deserted her for the queen Vasumati."[104] This precedes the forthcoming miserable fate of Shakuntala, who is shortly repudiated. The king's image is painted perfidious and capricious, and he then declares: "Strange! that song has filled me with a most peculiar sensation. A melancholy feeling has come over me, and I seem to yearn after some long-forgotten object of affection".[105] This scene faintly outlines a picture of the licentious royal life and patriarchal oppression which are held in a form of primeval simplicity, coinciding the realistic account in *Artha Sastra* (*The Doctrine of Prosperity*) interpreted as follows:

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[102] This coincides with the classical Greek aesthetic idea of beauty which is a complex of diversity and uniformity.

[103] *Shakuntala*, Act 5, p. 75.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., Act 5, 76.

> A luxurious and sensual court was supported from state funds and there the king was surrounded by women at all times. They looked after his every need, acted as bodyguard and performed as actresses and dancers for his entertainment. Slave labour was an integrated institution, women were treated as inferiors at all social levels, and prostitution was organized and a recognized occupation.[106]

Constancy is re-affirmed after its negation, and after constancy has been re-affirmed, the love between the protagonists reaches a higher level.[107] In this sense, Lady Yang's ruination and Shakuntala's vanishing are preparations in negative mode for their romantic sublimity, because however the lovers may transcend concupiscence, in a sense, "death is still the sign of carnal passion."[108]

Lady Yang's death is undeniably a negation of constancy, but provides an expedient reconciliation for the conflict between personal emotion and public responsibility. The hero is not only a lover for her, but also a monarch for the state and its people. Once the existence and nature of this conflict is perceived, it becomes clear that her death is a sad necessity. All the characters concerned are in agreement that Lady Yang should die. The mutinous troops demand it. The chief eunuch strongly advises the emperor to discard love for the sake of righteous duty. Even Lady Yang herself is willing to sacrifice herself, and the emperor finally consents. In such circumstances, a collective impetus and objective momentum overcome individual personal feelings and strength. Her death is a doomed calamity, totally ineluctable, and the responsibility for it may be attributed to the times and society rather than to the emperor as an individual.[109]

This being the case, while the lovers no longer exist, in that she has died and he has shifted from a lover into a monarch, love, however, remains, since she leaves him with regret and he continues to value her by his love more than his own life, or anything except the state. This is the intrinsic foundation for the next negation, that of the negation just discussed. On this point this play diverges from its predecessor, *Autumn in*

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[106] A. C. Scott, *The Theatre of Asia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), p. 27.

[107] Love is classified by Orage into three kinds: instinctive love, emotional love, and conscious love. The first type is by "Nature", the second "is not only short-lived, but it evokes its slayer", and in the third, the lover "perfects himself in order that he may purely wish and aid the perfection of his beloved." This conscious love especially accounts for Lady Yang's self-sacrifice for Love, which is opposite to the hero's sacrifice of love for the state. As Orage also says: "The conscious love motive, in its developed state, is the wish that the object should arrive at its own native perfection, regardless of the consequences to the lover." See A. R. Orage, *On love: with some aphorisms & other essays* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), pp. 9 & 8.

[108] Wallace Fowlie, *Love in Literature: Studies in symbolic expression* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1965), p. 34.

[109] See *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 25.

the Palace of the Han, which expresses unalloyed approval of the sacrifice of love for the sake of the state.[110]

Similarly in *Shakuntala*, their love survives even when the lovers no longer exist. Firstly, the loss of his memory has been no more than an excessive penalty imposed upon the king by an irascible demigod, and secondly, even if Shakuntala appears a stranger to him, he still loves her with great emotion. This being so, he is actually only denying her marriage with him, not negating his passion for her, as seen in the following:

> (Removes her veil.)
> King (gazing at Shakuntala. Aside.)
> *What charms are here revealed before mine eyes!*
> *Truly no blemish mars the symmetry*
> *Of that fair form; yet can I ne'er believe*
> *She is my wedded wife; and like a bee*
> *That circles round the flower whose nectared cup*
> *Teems with the dew of morning, I must pause*
> *Ere eagerly taste the proffered sweetness.*
> (Remains wrapped in thought.)[111]

Clearly the supernatural spell is extraneous, whereas what is real and vital is the love than comes from inside him. It is, so to speak, "love at first sight" for the second time. Like the Chinese play, the surviving inner "romantic root" (*qinggen*)[112] is an intrinsic foundation for the re-affirmation of constancy.

The heroines' exit in each case marks a new section of the plot and the beginning of the re-affirmation of constancy, and from this point on, both plays become even more and considerably more breathtaking, their thematic depth intensifying. Discussed below are some salient similarities between them.

Audience and readers might well feel surprised when Lady Yang dies at the end of Act Twenty-five, right in the middle of the play, and may well wonder whether the plot could then hold much more, since its heroine has died. It seems incredible that the plot should then continue over yet more vital territory, ranging from human society and such supernatural realms and milieux as the Netherworld, a mirage, the moon, Heaven, that dialogues are conducted so smoothly and easily between the living and the dead, the

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[110] Regarding this point, Liu Jung-en says: "The only thing which has continued to puzzle people over the ages is that when the emperor hears of the death of Wang Ch'iang he shows not a shred of emotion for his beloved. This is singular; it has a false ring. Some again (this has come to be an awful obsession with the super-patriots) have read into the play the playwright's attack on those Chinese who surrendered themselves to the Mongols as a woman to a man, and did not have the courage of Wang Ch'iang to choose death rather than be the queen of a foreign king." *Six Yüan Plays*, Penguin Classics (U. K. : The Chaucer Press), p. 33.

[111] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 5, p. 81.

[112] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 32, p. 143.

mortal and the immortal. Equally surprising is that with its underlying historical pigmentation, the play could come to be tinged with such mysterious other-worldly hues. The possibility of such perplexities may be dispelled if one takes into account the playwright's aim of reaffirming constancy. In *Shakuntala*, shortly after Shakuntala is borne up to Heaven by a shining apparition, the king regains his memory and falls much deeper in love with her and as a consequence suffers much greater anguish. Like the emperor in *Palace of Eternal Life*, the king constantly expresses his yearning for his vanished lover as if she is still in this world with him. Though he is never answered, his side of a correspondence between them still operates. Just as in *Palace of Eternal Life*, the different realms are eventually mixed and spiritual communication and physical contact accordingly become intercommunicating. Concerning this point, there is another interesting resemblance. Both the king and the emperor leave the mortal world and ascend to the immortal realm, where, still of mortal constitution and psychology , they both become semi-immortal, so that they are thus able to soar through the celestial kingdoms without the burden of any physical limitations and to live on in the supernatural dimension without losing their human physique and human nature. From the literary-critical point of view, such transcendence and transitions may be regarded as the sublime zenith of love, the final outcome of the reaffirmation of constancy.

The plays' expansion of scope from the mortal world to other realms itself represents an augmentation of constancy's definition and the enlargement of its application. As it occurs, the concept of constancy penetrates more layers opens up to more perspectives, and in return, constancy is consolidated and its connotation enriched. This necessarily produces the effect that, once the characters step out of the human world, the whole set of dramatic ideas follows that step, leading the audience to transcend the triviality and commonplaceness of mortal life and surmount mere human considerations. Once this circumstance prevails, the concept of constancy converges subtly into those of sublimity, eternity, the absolute and so forth, penetrating the cosmic. Now that constancy has broken free from all physical particularities, it elevates itself into an ontological plane. As it rises into the different, immortal realms, all differences are assimilated. In the last act of *Palace of Eternal Life*, the earthly and the heavenly become inextricably joined, distinctions between mortals and immortals are blurred, and the social gap between monarch and subjects is filled. Similarly in *Shakuntala*, when dialogues eventually take place between human beings and god, the natural and supernatural are blended. At such junctures, we perceive in *Palace of Eternal Life* the Daoist idea of the interchangeability of all things and also the Buddhist idea of void and truth; and in *Shakuntala* the supernatural notion that man and god both share the same feelings.

4. 6

Love between the dead and the living is, as far as we know, something of fiction and fantasy, but exists authentically in the philosophical or conceptual sense. This point is reflected in our two plays. Love after death and separation from the body is seen in them not as impracticable but as something that does indeed endure on, exhibiting, moreover, even more vitality and exuberance, and by the fact of its receiving more vivid and detailed descriptions, and accordingly gaining more power to touch and move.

Once the lovers have been separated in *Palace of Eternal Life*, physical contact between them has become impossible and communication even in the paranormal sense very limited as well, while in *Shakuntala* the situation is even more difficult for both parties. Shakuntala is now totally absent, and the king has even less chance to contact her than the emperor does Lady Yang. Yet for all these difficulties, his love still flourishes, growing in all manner of ways. Indeed, just as the descriptions of love for the departed one pervade half of *Palace of Eternal Life,* so they occupy no less than a third of *Shakuntala.*

Given these circumstances, the impossible becomes feasible and eventually becomes reality. This is owing to what some term *activism.* Activism is generally a philosophical concept, but in this context may be used to refer to the strengthening or enlarging of the potential of the subject matter. For the protagonists, activism is a conceptual means of enriching their subjective potential and changing their objective surroundings. With it, love is enabled to transcend its physical foundation and keep advancing on the conceptual plane, with the lovers possessing more freedom in the realm of their subjective inclinations. In this respect, the second half of *Palace of Eternal Life* and the final one third of *Shakuntala* lay emphases on the spiritual side of love, on the metaphysical level, in contrast to the down-to-earth mortal phases of their romantic affairs, which are mainly on the physical and sensuous plane.[113] In both works, love starts

[113] The function of will and imagination is considered literally magical, in support of which fact Colin Wilson quotes many cases, for instance: "Mathers sees the imagination as an essential adjunct of the will, analogous to the range-finder on a gun. Its purpose is to direct the will clearly and unambiguously towards its object. And this is obviously true of all our willed activities. The effect of wanting something strongly is not only to arouse one's desires, but to arouse the *energies* that will enable one to pursue it. . . . But the magical tradition insists that the will has a power that is independent of the physical world. It can be transmitted directly, as it were, like radio waves. So for Mathers, there would be nothing unusual in the idea of a man using 'magic' to seduce a girl. It would simply be a part of what is known as 'natural magic' (to distinguish it from spiritual magic, or a magic that uses the 'higher forces' of the universe). . . . This notion of the magical power of the imagination is not confined to the Western tradition; it can be found all over the world." See "In Search of Faculty X", in his *Mysteries: An investigation into the occult, the paranormal and the supernatural* (Graft Books, 1978), pp. 246-7. From this viewpoint of paranormal studies, the actual communication without physique between the lovers in both the plays is highly credible.

"at first sight", springing largely from natural attraction and spontaneous affinity, then grows in a similar direction in each. Before this new phase, even though spiritual joys have by no means been utterly excluded, sensuosity and erotic descriptions have been, in comparison, much more salient. It is the heroines' withdrawal that destroys the conditions for sensuosity, so that this turning point into the second phase marks the shift from the sensory to the spiritual.

Since physical contact then becomes impossible, what remains are emotional recollections and spiritual communications only, and the balance between mind and body is endangered. Confronted with such an adverse situation of imbalance, the male protagonists resort to activism and endeavour to recreate the object of their love, their woman, in a second kind of reality. In *Palace of Eternal Life*, the emperor often unconsciously assumes Lady Yang is still alive, and sighs and laments to her, imploring her for her forgiveness and directly conversing with her as if she is present before him in the flesh. In his songs and dialogues he now addresses her in the second person, "you", which of itself conjures up to the audience a latent image of her as present with him, even a phantom of her there. In *Shakuntala* the king remains always haunted by her imagined presence, all his mind and feeling as fully engaged with her as were she there in the flesh.

Their past love that was a harmony between mind and body has created an enduring, nigh obsessive attachment, and developed by activisim is allowed even to engender trances and hallucinations. There are very similar episodes in both plays. The male protagonists are entranced by portraits of the heroines, and therefore transfer their fierce passion to these images. In Act Thirty-two of *Palace of Eternal Life*, when the emperor is returning to the capital after the rebellion, he passes by the spot where Lady Yang was sacrificed, and has a model or mannikin of her made, and mourns before this icon of her, which is set up in a newly built temple. From the beginning to the end of this act, this mannikin is imbued with vitality and is treated as if indeed alive. The emperor is so obsessed that he can even mistake the mannikin for a real living Lady Yang:

> EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
> *Newly dressed,*
> *She is escorted by maids,*
> *She is sheltered by fans.*
> *Once again,*
> *I mistake it for the time we first pledged our love*
> *And later entered the chamber at midnight.* [114]

[114] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 32, p. 143.

This is not the rhetoric of fantasy but meant literally, as can be corroborated by the later scene in which the mannikin of Lady Yang actually comes to life:

> (. . .The emperor looks at the image, only to be shocked.)
> EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Alas! look, Gao! Fancy!- tears must have been shed down her cheeks!
> (Gao and the Maids look up at the mannikin.)
> GAO. Ah! her face is really covered with tears! Fancy that, just fancy!
> EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Ah me! My darling!
> *I see --*
> *Tears are shedding down her cheeks,*
> *Drop after drop to her breast.*
> *She has that sorrowful countenance of hers*
> *When she clung to my robe and begged me for suicide,*
> *It is her tragic face*
> *When she looked over her shoulder and swallowed her sobs.*
> *This sadness is indeed unique,*
> *Even an iron man could feel heartbroken,*
> *No wonder the clay figure can shed tears!* [115]

Clearly the play combines the realistic plane with a supernatural one, convincingly mixing logical credibilities with supernatural atmospheres and phenomena. In terms of artistic creation, it is fictional. In terms of normal reality, it is magic. In paranormal terms, it is factual in tone. In philosophical senses it accentuates the force of activism. Activism as a philosophical idea lays emphasis on the importance of subjectivity, and finds its reflection to a greater or lesser degree in various theories of the paranormal.[116] When it is embodied in literary or artistic creations, supernatural incidents may occur, such as the scene quoted above. By this episode, not only is the plot made more intriguing, but, far more importantly, the power of constancy is underlined and the spiritual side of love accentuated. Ordinary reality is transformed by the power of sincere ardour, and subjectivity takes prominence over objectivity. [117] In this way, activism is utilised dramaturgically.[118]

Very similar in *Shakuntala* is a scene in Act Six. Although the portrait of Shakuntala never comes to life, for the king, too, it is breathed with vitality through

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[115] Ibid., p. 144.

[116] For instance, imagination is considered by Colin Wilson to have the literal magical power to change reality, which is an echo of activism. Cf. C. Wilson, *Mystery*, op. cit.

[117] As it is put in the opening aria of *Palace of Eternal Life*: love, "moves metal and stone and makes heaven and earth swirl" (*gan jinshi, hui tiandi*).

[118] Tradition also has a very touching anecdote which tells that the Emperor, longing to rejoin his love in heaven, deliberately abstained from food and died at the age of seventy eight. This is also activistic. Cf. "*The Palace of Eternal Youth* and its Author", in Yang, *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, op. cit., p. 316.

activism. The king's entrance lasts much longer than the emperor's in *Palace of Eternal Life*:

> King.
>
> *My loved one came but lately to my presence*
> *And offered me herself, but in my folly*
> *I spurned the gift, and now I fondly cling*
> *To her mere image; even as a madman*
> *Would pass the waters of the gushing stream,*
> *And thirst for airy vapours of the desert.*
>
> Madhavya (aside). He has been fool enough to forego the reality for the semblance, the substance for the shadow. [119]

Later the king, most informatively by its inference, mistakes a bee in the picture for a real one:

> Madhavaya. . . . Pray, why does the Queen covers her lips with the tips of her fingers, bright as the blossom of a lily, as if she were afraid of something? (Looking more closely.) Oh! I see; a vagabond bee, intent on thieving the honey of flowers has mistaken her mouth for a rose-bud, and is trying to settle upon it.
>
> King. A bee! drive off the impudent insect, will you?
>
> . . .
>
> Madhavaya. . . . He is stark mad, that's clear; and I believe, by keeping him company, I am begging to talk almost as wildly. (Aloud.) Look, it is only a painted bee.
>
> King. Painted? impossible!
>
> . . .
>
> King. Oh! my dear friend, why were you so ill-natured as to tell me the truth?
>
> *While, all entranced, I gazed upon her picture,*
> *My loved one seemed to live before my eyes,*
> *Till every fiber of my being thrilled*
> *With rapturous emotion. Oh! 'twas cruel*
> *To dissipate the day-dream, and transform*
> *The blissful vision to a lifeless image.*[120]

His state of hallucination is not pathological of course, but an artistic embellishment produced as a positive outcome of the utilisation of activism. In Freudian senses it is a daydream with meaningful undertones, but it functions here with more elevated artistic significance than that.

Before we finish this section, it warrants noting in passing that, the reaffirmation of love creates tragic vigour and power as opposed to the delicate and mild tragic sadness that there might otherwise have been. It illuminates the theme with an optimistic or cheerful light, saving it from what could have been some passive fatalism. In this way,

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[119] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 6, P. 99.
[120] Ibid., Act 6, pp. 100-1.

the play not only presents yearning and sorrows, it, more importantly for the clear purposes of the playwright, also predicts the success or triumph of love in moral, spiritual and supernatural senses, illustrating in so doing the creative capacity of activism as a dramaturgical technique. Even death, despite its somewhat fatalistic and pessimistic associations here, still manifests the triumph of love, because "death and love are inseparable"[121]. Death in this context is a symbol for "devotion", and, as in Hegel's parlance, it is indicative of the highest phase of love.[122] Hegel says:

> It is especially in female characters that love rises to its highest beauty; for it is in woman that this devotion, this self-surrender, is the supreme point; for she concentrates and develops her whole spiritual and actual life in this sentiment, finds in it alone a context of existence, and disappears before the blast of misfortune, like a light extinguished at the first rude breath. [123]

This idea is particularly applicable to Lady Yang.

So far we have been bringing to light the twofold meanings of constancy in the dramatic context. On the one hand, it is seen as governed by Nature and intuition, as in the first half of both *Palace of Eternal life* and *Shakuntala,* and on the other, it is developed by activism, a rational theory used to strengthen the action in the guise of spontaneity and sensuosity, which vitalise past feelings of the heroes and create a second reality, that of the supranormal presence of the heroine. Love is thus enabled to remain constant across the different dimensions and overleap the chasms separating various realms, all this as revealed in the latter half of each play.

In short, constancy and "passionism" provide impetus for the dramatic movement, impelling incidents to surge forward and at the same time further revealing and deepening the theme with each step. Because of constancy, love is the starting point **and** the terminal point as far as both dramatic structure and thematic exploration are concerned. Because of this, love gains affinity to such things as eternity and the absolute. With constancy, it is implied, love assimilates everything and disseminates its all-encompassing power through the universe. In *Palace of Eternal Life* it finally blurs spatial and temporal distinctions, establishes communication between god, man and

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[121] Wallace Fowlie, *Love in Literature*, op. cit., p. 34.

[122] Cf. Hegel: "The highest phase of love is the *devotion* of the subject or person to an individual of the opposite sex, the surrender of his independent consciousness, and of his individual isolated being, which feels itself to have become thoroughly penetrated with its own knowledge of itself, for the first time in the consciousness of another." Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Symbolic, Classic, and Romantic", in Bernard F. Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), p. 528.

[123] Hegel, "Symbolic, Classic, and Romantic", in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, op. cit., p. 529.

ghost, constructs a channel between Earth, Paradise, Heaven, the moon, the illusion, Purgatory and Hell, and eventually causes all the wills in all these realms to be identified with each other. Similarly, the miracle in *Shakuntala* is created simply by constancy or the remembrance of love, owing to which their reunion acquires a fatal imperative, the intent of each character, mortal and immortal, coming to be assimilated to the other's, so "the lover does not exist for himself, does not live and care for himself, but finds the essence of his own existence in another, and yet completely enjoys himself in this other, constitutes the infinity of love."[124]

[124] Ibid.

Part Two. Stylistic Aspects

Love in both *Shakuntala* and *Palace of Eternal Life* possesses a strong momentum towards the transcendance of social limits and historical conditioning, heading towards the absolute. Complementing their thematic argument, which avails itself of the plot, the dramatic incidents, the characterisations and the general rationale of their text, both works make use of stylistic elements in order to consolidate the argument. Typical of their stylistic techniques is to configure the aesthetic concepts of beauty and sublimity into conceptual imagery, so as to attain a panegyric linguistic tonality for the topic of love, and build up a pervading romantic ambience. To this end, conceptual image imbued with beauty and sublimity is projected onto love as a concept, with romantic episodes to embody them, combining to produce an aesthetic evaluation and emotional assessment of the positive values of love.[1] What determine the linguistic tonality are the *beauty* and *sublimity*, which work on the audience's aesthetic feelings directly rather than resorting to logical reasoning and deduction. In both plays, since these aesthetic concepts also reside in various aspects such as expository language, dramatic incidents, scenic elements and so on, the non-rationalising aesthetic channels present special evaluations and interpretations of their own.

Language tonality often plays an active and sometimes even decisive role in affecting or determining connotations. This phenomenon is of rhetoric which is generally regarded as opposed or complementary to plain expository rationalisation. That is to say, it is a form of diction which quite apart from any consciously rationalised content is able to indicate or imply approval or disapproval of whatever it refers to. The relationship between such tonality and literary subject matter is analogous to that between intonation and speech. Just as in the latter relationship, it conveys the author's attitude towards the content of the utterance, for instance whether it is ironical, or critical, or insinuating, or

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[1]Hegel says: "An image occurs especially when two phenomena or situations (more or less independent when taken by themselves) are unified, so that one situation affords the meaning which is to be made intelligible by the image of the other." See "Symbolism of the Comparative Art-form", in his *Aesthetics*, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 408. In our cases, the first situation usually does not offer any specific meaning, but omnipresent feeling only.

derogatory (negative), or laudatory, or commendable, or panegyric, or eulogistic, or of euphemism (positive), or indifferent, or dispassionate, or impassive, or apathetic (neutral), in short casting emotional colouring on the content.

When dealing with love, our plays are obviously tendentious toward their subject matter. This tendentious attitude is not made clear by thematic argument and logical induction, but also implied from the tone of language. Tonality is a synchronous evaluation of the language's content. Language with such qualities and power as it can provide works in a hidden way on the audience's emotions, seeking to make them identify with the playwrights subjective inclinations, so that a spontaneous intercommunication is established.

For this purpose, each of the two plays resorts to a variety of techniques. In other words, the fulfilment of the purpose is not purely a matter of rhetoric or linguistic device, but dependent on the dramaturgical whole. That is why the following study is not in the main a linguistic analysis, such analyses in fact being inappropriate, by the confines of their highly and narrowly rationalised techniques, to deal with this phenomenon based on something quite other than plain conscious rationalisation.

How has the language of these plays achieved a tonality that fosters the ambience of love? Firstly, by utilising the conceptual image of *beauty* and *sublimity*, it applies a hue of approval to such a topic. Beauty and sublimity, may either exist as a consciously rationalised aesthetic concept, or be configured and visualised as images, thus communicating by means of form rather than direct, plain semantics. When language contains such images, they project the luminance of the concepts of beauty and sublimity onto the object, and this object thereby draws positive emotive reactions from readers or audience. By repetition, this effect escalates, until the required general atmosphere is built up and a certain prevailing mood established. By then the overall tonality has taken shape, in a manner resembling the way in which logical inductions accumulate to produce a conclusion.

It is here of some use to define our distinction between differing kinds of imagery. There is much confusion occasioned by the varied general uses of terms such as *image* and *imagery*. Here we used them in a similar sense, employing "imagery" as the collective or generic term and "image" for the specific instance. Images or imagery are features of language that conjure up or produce views or pictures of objects, thoughts, feelings, actions, and indeed anything. The *literal image* is that which uses plain, literal, non-figurative language. The *perceptual image* (Chinese *xingxiang*) is that which uses the forms of things metaphorically to convey a visualisable picture, whereas the *conceptual image* (Chinese *yixiang*) is that which conveys an idea not visualisable but conceivable to the person who is the receptor (audience, reader, etc.). In practice there is

often an overlap or interlacing between these types, but the distinction is useful in attempts to reach greater finesse of analysis. Perceptual images use their vividness to function more through intuitive faculties than through conscious rationalisations, and in this they differ from conceptual images. With the latter, a single word may be enough to convey the abstract concept, but with the former more words, even phrases, sentences, paragraphs or more are generally required, to create icons that seem more structurally tangible and visible. Hegel says:

> In this connection the image can have for its meaning a whole series of situations, activities, productions, modes of existence, etc., and it can illustrate the meaning by a similar series drawn from an independent but cognate sphere, without putting the meaning as such in so many words into the image itself. [2]

And thinking in a similar direction, S. Alexander declares:

> The importance of Mr. Croce's form of the doctrine is that according to him the images which are beautiful and are translated for purposes of communication into material form are themselves expression; image and expression are one. The spoken word is the most obvious instance of expression of an inward idea, and accordingly a linguistic department of aesthetics. Ideas and their motor issue or overflow are part and parcel of the one whole.[3]

It should be noted in passing that imagery in literature has a particular limitation, as opposed for instance to the fine arts with their visibility and tangibility, in that it is inevitably a one-dimensional linguistic creation, thus being of indirect vision, conveying its images through the channel of imaginative and mental association established by a process of creative appreciation on the part of the audience or reader. For example, "rose" as a single word can produce an icon, and by imagination and idea-association, its appearance, colour, texture, and even smell may be conveyed. "Conceptual images" are less concrete, more in the nature of abstract concepts, having in general less visually vivid but intellectually deeper connotations. The perceptual image is characterised by particularity and visualisation, whereas the conceptual image is likely to have more abstract reverberations and wider overtones, and may consist of a unity of related images, in which situation it acts as an organism of images and generates more meaning than the totality of those produced by the individual component images, just as a sentence organises its words grammatically so that its synthetic meaning is more than the sum of its semantic components. In this way, each component image of the compound

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[2] "Symbolism of the Comparative Art-form", in his *Aesthetics*, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 308-9.

[3] S. Alexander, *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* (London: Macmillan & Co., Lit., 1933), p. 132.

conceptual image acts as a medium to pack in more specific connotation. It should again be stressed that the implications of perceptual images and conceptual images differ from those of rationalised argument or plain semantic denotations by their not being so fixed in isolated sense and by the greater dependence of their aesthetic meaningfulness upon their context. For instance, a conceptual image of "lily" may symbolise purity and virtue, and "rose" love, but all the same, neither virtue nor love has either logical or semantic connection to the lily or rose in their botanical sense. Thus perceptual image and conceptual image can be distinguished in terms of physical substance; that is to say, whereas the perceptual image must have a physical "crust" of reality, "reality" as a literary-critical term here referring to what is called "second reality" -- situation and circumstance represented by language as reality in literature, or simply, the reflection of ordinary reality reflected in the arts, -- the conceptual image on the other hand does not necessarily reside in the physical dimension, for instance, as in the following from *Palace of Eternal Life*:

> *Who would have foreseen that*
> *Tragically,*
> *The moon fell and the flower was picked.*
> *Love's clouds retreated,*
> *Love's rain stopped,*
> *With vast regret,*
> *We were severed by death and life.* [4]

The moon, flower, cloud and rain are commonplace allusions to romance and love-making, and here thus conceptual images, not to be taken as literal reality but as symbolic abstractions.

Let us proceed to some closer look at the way in which the imagery of these plays functions as a complement to their thematic element. Perceptual images and conceptual images, especially the latter, bear emotional colour which reflects the subjective world of their creator, and also projects his subjective light over the objects around them. In this way, they provide an aesthetic interpretation for these objects and extend their semantic value. In our plays, which are so laden with beauty and sublimity, these images justify the concept of Love and the course of romance, creating an ultra-romantic atmosphere.[5]

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[4] *Palace of Eternal Youth*, op. cit., Act 47, p. 209.

[5] In this light it is distinguished from the scenic elements, the latter of which is that of the particular and dramatic milieu rather than the former one of conceptional sensation. Regarding this, I. A. Richard says: "Too much importance has always been attached to the sensory qualities of images. What gives an image efficacy is less its vividness as an image than its character as a mental event peculiarly connected with sensation". As quoted in *Theory of Literature*, by René Wellek & Austin Warren (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949), p. 191.

Beauty is omnipresent in both plays. It may even appear excessively present unless one appreciates its artistically complementary contribution to the plays' ubiquitous consciousness of Love. Its aesthetic office may be accounted for as by Hegel: "Beauty is the Idea as it manifests itself to sense, as truth is the Idea as it manifests itself to thought."[6] Images in both these plays are not very symbolic, not as much as are referents, since they do not stand for any specific ideas, but convey the physical externals of beauty as an attitude only.[7]

The following is a striking culture-specific example from *Shakuntala*:

> Anasuya. See, dear Shakuntala, here is the young jasmine, which you named "the Moonlight of the Grove," the self-elected wife of the mango-tree. Have you forgotten?
>
> Shakuntala. Rather will I forget myself. . . . How delightful is the season when the jasmine-creeper and the mango-tree seem thus to unite in mutual embraces! the fresh blossoms of the jasmine resemble the bloom of a young bride, and the newly-formed shoots of the mango appear to make it her natural protector.[8]

This dialogue forms a vivid image that is perfumed with the scent of beauty. From a narrow critical sense, it may seem superfluous until we identify the object onto which its subjective colour is superimposed. In most similar cases in the play, such an object is that of love as an omnipresent entity. It is apparent that such a perceptual image would function as a referent to love, or to the imminent love intimacies between the protagonists. The linkage between this image and the latent love motif, which appears more openly later on, is hinted at by the metaphorical expressions' being intermingled with such descriptions as "a young bride", "her natural protector" and so on. What transmits beauty here is the image or rather group of images, those of the jasmine creeper with flowers named "The Moonlight of the Grove" entwining a mango-tree against a background of the beautiful scenery, and when beauty is superimposed onto love, the latter acquires a positive hue.

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[6] As quoted in Geddes MacGregor, *Aesthetic Experience in Religion* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1947), p. 34.

[7] Cf.: "The visual image is a sensation or a perception, but it may also 'stand for,' refer to, something invisible, something 'inner.' It can be both presentation and representation at once." René Wellek & Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, op. cit., p. 192; and: "The beautiful is expression as expressive of its subject matter; that is, it portrays the real or true character of its subject. It deals, in the Aristotelian phrase, with the universal or general as embodied in the particular; it is the universal rendered in concrete form. This doctrine is compatible with the admitted fact that art is always individual, the work of art some individual subject." S. Alexander, *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* (London: Macmillan & Co., Lit., 1933), p. 135.

[8] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 1, p. 28.

Many examples are available to show that the text of this play abounds with images of beauty. When the king is agonising over his passionate love, he wanders in the wilderness and seeks Shakuntala simply for another sight of his beloved:

> King. . . . (Walking and looking around.) I suspect the fair one has but just passed by this avenue of young trees.
>
> *Here, as she tripped along, her fingers plucked*
> *The opening buds, these lacerated plants,*
> *Shorn of their fairest blossoms by her hand,*
> *Seem like dismembered trunks, whose recent wounds*
> *Are still unclosed; while from the bleeding socket*
> *Of many a severed stalk, the milky juice*
> *Still slowly trickles, and betrays her path.*
>
> (Feeling a breeze.) What a delicious breeze meets me in this spot!
>
> *Here are the zephyr, fragrant with the scent*
> *Of lotuses, and laden with the spray*
> *Caught from the waters of the rippling stream,*
> *Folds in its close embrace my fevered limbs.*
>
> (Walking and looking about.) She must be somewhere in the neighbourhood of this arbour of overhanging creepers, enclosed by plantations of cane. (Looking down.)
>
> *For at the entrance here I plainly see*
> *A line of footsteps printed in the sand.*
> *Here are the fresh impressions of her feet;*
> *Their well-known outlines faintly marked in front,*
> *More deeply towards the heel; betokening*
> *The graceful undulation of her gait.*
>
> I will peep through those branches. (Walking and looking. . . .) Ah! now my eyes are gratified by an entrancing sight. Yonder is the beloved of my heart reclining on a rock strewn with flowers, and attended by her two friends, How fortunate! Concealed behind the leaves, I will listen to their conversation, without raising their suspicions.[9]

More often than not when the king's feelings are described, Shakuntala's physical beauty is portrayed in detail. This being so, it is clear that her beauty is not only the object of his desire, on the dramatic level, but also a subtle implication of his romantic feelings, on the thematic level, in other words that her beauty is a perceptual image manifesting the rightness of his love, since in general terms it is surely right to love a thing of beauty. F. E. Sparshortt notes:

> Goodness and beauty are sometimes identified. Why not, after all? Beauty, no doubt, is a good thing, and goodness as such is beautiful. . . . In the Definitions included in the Platonic corpus one whole entry reads *kalon: to agathon* -- "Beauty: the good." . . .
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> Perhaps a purified perception would find nothing but goodness beautiful.[10]

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[9] Ibid., Act 3, p. 49-50.

[10] F. E. Sparshott, *The Structure of Aesthetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, and, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 64.

It may follow from this, that the object of one's love, who has the quality of beauty, determines the nature and quality of love. Geddes MacGregor says:

> The relation of beauty to the idea or postulate of reason is explained by a doctrine of symbolism. An idea is symbolized neither by ways of a mere conventional sign nor abstractly as a 'scheme', but through a similarity between the rules governing our reflection in the symbol and those governing the idea. In this way Kant makes the pronouncement that **beauty is a symbol of the moral order** (*Sittichkeit*).[11]

Kant holds a similar idea couched in different fashion: "The Beautiful is the symbol of the morally Good"[12], and:

> We often describe beautiful objects of nature or art by names that seem to put a moral appreciation at their basis. We call buildings or trees majestic and magnificent, landscapes laughing and gay; even colours are called innocent, modest, tender, because they excite sensations which have something analogous to the consciousness of the state of mind brought about by moral judgment. [13]

There are more examples in Act One:

King.

A most just observation!
This youthful form, whose bosom's swelling charms
By the bark's knotted tissue are concealed,
Like some fair bud close folded in its sheath,
Give not to view the blooming of its beauty. [14]

King.

Her ruddy lip vies with the opening bud;
Her graceful arms are as the twinning stalks;
And her whole form is radiant with the glow
Of youthful beauty, as the tree with bloom. [15]

The same technique is repeated in Act Two:

King.

This peerless maid is like a fragrant flower,
Whose perfumed breath has never been diffused;

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[11] MacGregor, *Aesthetic Experience in Religion*, op. cit., p. 34; emboldenings mine.
[12] "Of Beauty as the Symbol of Morality", in his *Kritik of Judgment* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), pp. 250-1.
[13] Ibid., p. 252.
[14] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 1, p. 27.
[15] Ibid., Act 1, pp. 27-8.

A tender bud, that on profaning hand
Has dared to sever from its patent stalk;
A gem of priceless water, just released
Pure and unblemished from its flittering bed.
Or may the maiden haply be compared
To sweetest honey, that no mortal lip
Has sipped; or rather to the mellowed fruit
Of virtuous actions in some former birth,
Now brought to full perfection? [16]

Taking the referential function of "beauty" into consideration, it is not difficult to understand why in literary works which have a love theme feminine beauty is very often, although not always, given such a large coverage as, looked at dispassionately, might appear rather excessive. The exceptions to this regular rule might well be distinguished ones, such as *Jane Eyre*, in which the heroine is very successful in love but not pretty and therefore not lavished with descriptions of her looks. In the generality of romantic works, however, the heroine's beauty not only arouses the hero's passion but also acts as a perceptual image which determines the value of that passion, by a subliminal interaction of reactions.

In the last example quoted above, the diction is patterned in two interlaced schemata, one being descriptive of her beauty and grace and the other manifesting the king's passion and desire. The former stands on the rhetorical level, using many metaphors and similes to establish a complete image of Shakuntala, though this image is actually a collection of sub-images such as "a fragrant flower" and "a tender bud". In the other schema, his passion is revealed by descriptions of the object of his passion. In a reciprocal manner, her beauty reflects his passion, and his passion is projected onto her beauty in turn. This artistic treatment and use of reciprocal interaction is more than technical or rhetorical. Clearly no purely linguistic or rhetorical device, it gains its effect in intrinsic association with deeper aesthetic creativity.

The images and the sub-images possessed by the former schema above are borrowed by the latter and act in it as conceptual images. The first reason why they are termable conceptual images is that for the second schema what is vital is not the visual particularity and tangibility, not the outer appearance or external shape, but the abstract connotation. The second and more important reason is that, for the latter schema, there exist no particular images, but only beauty, as an amorphous idea. The perceptual image of Shakuntala in the flesh is received by him as a corporeal man of fierce desire, but the incorporeal conceptual image is of the notion of love, which is a spiritual matter. It is such connotations possessed by the conceptual image that serves as the medium by

[16] Ibid., Act 1, p. 41.

which the communication between the two schemes is actualised. In the examples cited above, Shakuntala's physical looks appeal to both audience and the king, this being a theatrical effect in its appeal for the audience, and a dramatic one in its appeal for the *dramatis persona*, but nevertheless, to love as a conceptual activity is neither theatrical nor dramatic, but aesthetically spiritual. This example differs from the previous ones. In the earlier examples, the perceptual images of beauty and the concept of love unite in one schema, the first of them being a stylistic means of determining love's nature, quality and value, but in the last example, two schemata coincide, those of love and beauty. Love is an abstract consciousness and also a substantial matter, while beauty accordingly has a twofold significance, being in its physical aspects a perceptual image and in its spiritual aspects a conceptual image. This demonstrates the interchangeability of both types of image. The same one description can produce a perceptual image for a first schema, and a conceptual image for the second. The rapport between two schemata is inductive rather than mechanical, which is why such causality in general often escapes analysis.

In other words, beauty in the above instance assumes a pliable form, by which perceptual image and conceptual image are made interchangeable, the interpretation depending on which angle of view is adopted. This point may be illustrated by another example. When he regains his memory of Shakuntala, the king expresses his emotions as follows:

> King. . . . my dear friend, where shall I sit down, that I may enchant my sight by gazing on the twinning plants, which seem to remind me of the graceful shape of my beloved? [17]

The "twinning plants" is, as a real object, a perceptual image, but when this image of plant is likened to "the graceful shape" of her, it inclines to be a conceptual image, because its actual appearance has lost both import and importance, its symbolic connotation coming into prominence instead. Such a conceptual image has no physical substance, but is simply a product of the mind. As the symbolic meaning of the plant is more important for his mind than for his eyesight, the image is a thus a conceptual one. The double function pertains by the same one image. It remains the same one image, but is able to produce different significances to the different object and hence can be labelled with different terms of either perceptual image or conceptual image, or both. This point is exemplified by the following:

> King. . . . (Gazing at her passionately.) Why should I doubt it?
> *The maiden's spotless bosom is o'erspread*

[17] Ibid., Act 6, p. 95.

With cooling balsam; on her slender arm
Her only bracelet, twined with lotus stalks,
Hangs loose and withered; her recumbent form
Expresses languor. N'ver could noon-day sun
Inflict such fair disorder on a maid --
No, love, and love alone, is here to blame.
. . .

Shakuntala. (aside). I am, indeed, deeply in love; but cannot rashly disclosed my passion to these young girls.

Priyamvada. . . . Everyday you become thinner; though I must confess your complexion is still as beautiful as ever.

King. *Priyamvada speaks most truly.*

Sunk is her velvet cheek; her wasted bosom
Loses its fullness; e'en her slender waist
Grows more attenuate, her face is wan,
Her shoulders droop; -- as when the vernal blasts
Sear the young blossoms of the Madhavi,
Blighting their bloom; so mournful is the change,
Yet in its sadness, fascinating still,
Inflicted by the mighty lord of love
On the fair figure of the hermit's daughter. [18]

Wherever love is concerned, the diction of this play can barely disengage itself from descriptions of beauty. In this instance, when the lovers are infatuated, permeated, with love, the depiction of beauty is a cherished device of the playwright for the same purpose as before. As the king is "gazing at her passionately", her beauty is a perceptual image or the object of his sight ("gazing"), but at the same time also a conceptual image and a significant reference to his emotion ("passionately"). Thus two schemata are distinguished once again.

As an essential entity in the evoking of love atmosphere, beauty is ubiquitous, and even when Shakuntala is being tortured by her hopeless passion, the quality of her beauty is still religiously preserved, as seen when Priyamvada says: "Your complexion is still as beautiful as ever".[19] Her charming features function as both perceptual image and conceptual image. The following is similar instance:

King . . .
(looking around).

Here printed on the flowery couch I see
The fair impression of her slender limbs,
Here is the sweet confession of her love,
Traced with her mail upon the lotus leaf --
And yonder are the withered lily stalks

[18] Ibid., Act 3, pp. 50-1.
[19] Ibi., Act 3, p. 50-1.

That graced her wrist. . . . [20]

The same analysis also applies in this case. Beauty bathes and perfumes love. They are, put another way, deliberately interwoven. For one thing, the image of the lotus "leaf" does not generate aesthetic meaning as a leaf only, but, more importantly, the ideas associated with "lotus" have the effect of stirring our imagination to wider vistas. Similarly, the image of the withered lily "stalks" does not matter very much in itself, and indeed the "stalks", although linguistically or syntactically a central element, loses out in impact to its attributive "lily", as "lily" conveys more messages of beauty than does "stalks" and readily lends itself to allusions of love. This being so, even if "withered stalks" is anti-beauty, "withered **lily** stalks" as a unit still plays the role of conveying beauty, so that "lily" may be taken as a conceptual image, because although in the plain semantic sense it modifies the image of the stalks, it certainly does not have primary value for any visual substance it has in linkage with "withered", but conveys more meaning conceptually than it could as merely a perceptual image.

As with this Sanskrit play, so numerous like examples can be cited from *Palace of Eternal Life*. In Act Twenty-one "Peeping into the Bath", for instance, this mode of aesthetic treatment is commonly employed. This act is an organic combination of beauty and love, being notably erotic and sensuous. The passion between the protagonists is basically amoral or neutral, because it is, at this juncture, mainly based on natural desires, instinctive attractions and physical inclination, yet by means of various perceptual images and conceptual images of beauty they gain a kind of moral lustre and the description of their love rises to the eulogistic.

To achieve this elevation, this act firstly creates a verbal backdrop full of beauty, redolent with romance:

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Secluded and romote
Is the faint scenery surrounding the palace,
Beside the carved bridge,
Outside the pearled curtains,
The rain is being rolled up and the clouds are drifting speedily.
How endlessly meandering!
The winding vermilion rails surround the picture-like brook;
And the long, long verandas,
One after the other,
Approach the verdant vegetation,
Which along the vermilion walls,
Leads to the diamond gate.[21]

[20] Ibid., Act 3, p. 57.

This background determines the tone of the ensuing love descriptions, and it is against it that the lover are introduced in the bathhouse where Lady Yang has her famous erotic bath. Once the lovers enter, their surroundings are delineated in the same way as above:

> *The limpid water along the winding channel flows in,*
> *With waves to and fro, and ripples trembling.*
> *The fragrant spring, smooth and soft,*
> *Matches your flawless nudity.* [22]

By this point in the drama there have been many beauty-filled perceptual images and conceptual images, most of them intrinsically concerned with embellishing the romantic happenings. In the previous but one quotation, almost every noun-group is a conceptual image for beauty and delicacy, such as "the carved bridge", "the vermilion rail", "the picture-like brook", "the diamond gate," and so forth. The same is also true of the latter quote above, with its "the limpid water", "the winding channel", "the fragrant spring, smooth and soft", and so forth. The last line, "Matches your flawless nudity", neatly sums up the principal purpose and function of these conceptual images, they being used to proclaim that beauty matches beauty in mutual reinforcement. This is an induction or analogy latent in the subconscious of the audience, and even though one can only explain its workings by strenuous analysis, it operates effortlessly throughout and so subtly as to go unnoticed by the conscious mind. After such a preparation, the play begins to focus on the dramatic incidents and characters, and bathed in such an beautiful aura, everything is raised into the aesthetic realm. Following on from the above, the play depicts in an implicit way the eroticism of their bathing and simultaneous love-making:

> EMPEROR MINGHUANG. . . . Let's try the bath now. (The maids undress them.) Dearest, I am seeing you --
> *Taking off your cloud-like garment gradually,*
> *Showing your body with the lustre of diamond and the sheen of jade,*
> *I cannot but*
> *Oppose you,*[23]

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[21] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 21, p. 95.

[22] Ibid.

[23] The word "oppose" here is rendered from *dui* which has many meanings loosely interlaced loosely and indirectly. Those various meanings of *dui* centre around the conception of "pair", therefore as a noun, it can mean "pair", "couple", "double", "parallel", "antithesis", etc.. As a preposition, it functions similarly as do such English words as "toward", "against" and "opposite" and so on. As an adjective, it is close to mutual, face to face and so on. As a verb, it can mean "oppose", "to be against", "to reply", "to correspond", "to respond", "to compare", "to check", "to confirm", "to suit", "to counter", "to agree", "to accord", and so on. Interestingly, as a verb, it governs such antonyms as: "to oppose" versus "to suit", "to counter" versus "to agree", etc., all of which derive from the conception of "pair" and related to that of "mutuality". Owing to the semantic diversity of this character, it is difficult

Caress you,
Hold you,
Gaze at you,
And feel so tender with you! [24]

The dramatic value of these sexual incidents is brought out by artistic devices of the language, and this continues throughout the whole act. Immediately after this, the maids in attendance upon them sing:

Embracing in the dawn with the flowers,
Hugging in the night with the moon,
They have tasted all tastes of warmth and softness. [25]

Here a pair of conceptual images are included, "flowers in the dawn" and "the moon in the night", which convey a decidedly romantic and elevatedly aesthetic flavour. We see the linguistic subconscious and subliminal influences of rhetoric at work, diction such as "the flower and the moon" or "the flower and the willow", as will be discussed later below, being variations on linguistic clichés which are deeply embedded in the Chinese collective subconscious. Nevertheless, nothing could be more mistaken than to presume that such expressions are merely literary ornaments of no importance, only a superfluity of background and detached from the crucial ideas of the play. In fact the relationship of such a beauty-dyed backdrop as they combine to create to the theme of the drama acts a function similar to that of linguistic context to the specific meaning of an utterance, the former determining the latter to a large extent and the latter requiring the former. Retrospectively, we can now understand why the play has repeatedly used so many similar expressions which derive or are variants from a limited number of linguistic resources, most of which are firmly associated with the moon, flowers, the willow or spring, in short, with highly aesthetic referents. By these, beauty is subtly transmitted from the background to the subject matter, and the characters in love become unobtrusively imbued with the tonality constituted by the backdrop. Herein one may detect the discretion of the playwright's artistry. It moves the audience in hidden ways rather than persuades them front-on, or, putting it another way, works on their

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to translate with a single English word. Suggestively, this line means the hero is pushing himself against her, body to body. It depicts their physical contact, but is possesses other overtones: it suggests harmony, mutuality, physical correspondence, spiritual communication, so forth and so on. The reason why I choose "oppose" for *dui* is, firstly, it may partly preserve the original vagueness and ambiguity, and secondly, with this word this line can retain its philosophical understatement and remain in accordance with the Chinese dialectical idea of *yin* and *yang*, and even further stands in connection with the universally accepted idea on the relationship between both sexes, that masculinity and femininity oppose and complement each other.

[24] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 21, p. 95.

[25] Ibid., Act 21, p. 95.

underlying sensibilities rather than their conscious rationality, and it tends to convey a message as to whether the subject is beautiful or ugly rather than directly exerting any moral argument adjudging it right or wrong. It is "seeping" aesthetic evaluation rather than bursts of conscious logical assessment.

Once the atmosphere has been created and the tonality formed, the dramatic subject enters more deeply into more lavish amatory descriptions, and since by this time the background has imbued it with the redolences of beauty, love has become a pure, virtuous and noble thing, elevated above any possible implications of mere common sensuality. The scene continues from the previous quotation as follows:

Firmly connected, like
A shadow chasing its object,
Inseparable, as
The water that cannot be divided by a sword.
In a thousand ways they indulge,
In myriad ways they comply with each other.
They coincide with each other so as to share one heart.
Their honey-like affection is beyond words, . . .[26]

Continuing in the same direction, the subject matter becomes more and more deeply amorous in tone:

What is inside the mandarin-teal-bed-tent [27]
Defeats description,
Entangled, head over heels in love,
Endlessly on and on.[28]

Then comes the description of her nudity:

Her beautifully shaped naked jade body
Resembles a lotus blossom over the ripples,
Revealing exquisite radiation in the dew.
Her arms move lissomly and absorb the heavy fragrance. [29]
Her graceful waist is floating in the green ripples.

The sensuality of the portrait is intensified by the sheer amount of erotic close-up:

Bright,
Her flesh is like the shining rosy cloud,

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[26] Ibid., Act 21, p. 95-6.
[27] *Yuanyang-zhang* is a rhetorical expression for the site of love-making.
[28] Ibid., Act 21, p. 96.
[29] Ibid.

Pale,
Her bones are like the snow.
Under a soft stroke
Are betrayed a couple of floral buds; [30]
In the tiny spot of the spring
Is concealed the tiny navel with musk scent. [31]
How lovely is that parted seam of red petals,
As her secret place is now faintly seen.

At this point, after such strongly erotic descriptions, the text turns back to the emperor's amorous reactions:

Staring with his concentrated gaze,
Smiling all the while,
As infatuated as some idiot.
. . .
When even we maids steal a glance,
Our souls are nearly melted,
So, needless to say,
The emperor,
For all his experience in such things,
Still loses his self-control.
How they will the drying of the "spring fountain"!
How they will the washing of the "jade mount"! [32]
Again and again,
He kisses her perfumed shoulders,
Again and again,
He puts his arms around her slender waist.
. . .
Our lady,
Hiding her smile, without a word,
Responds affectionately.
Joyful, joyful,
The exulting spirited fluid and spring breeze [33]
Are as entranced as were they drunk. [34]

While these lines are pervaded with actual descriptions of physical intercourse, the playwright never omits to try and couch them in exquisite terms, so that their instinctivity and biological passion may be elevated to the realm of the aesthetic, as is demonstrable from the following:

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[30] *Yi-hen su-tou shuang beilei*, an aesthetic description of her privates.

[31] *Ban-dian chun cang xiao-she-qi*. Spring, *chun*, does not make any practical sense. *Chun* for spring is highly amorous in Chinese. The navel of musk deer is very precious, which is here compared to hers.

[32] "Spring fountain" may imply his organ and "jade mount" her body.

[33] *Lingye chunfeng, dandang huang ru zui.*

[34] Act 21, p. 96.

The waves shine with warmth,
The sunlight casts shadows,
A pair of dragons sporting together come up out of the pool.[35]

After the highly erotic and physically passionate scene, the text still utilises many conceptual images of beauty to reinforce the tonality which has been established:

Coming out of the warm spring,
The fresh coolness penetrates over all my body.
Gazing at her,
Her moon face has gained more lustre.
What I feel most tender for
Is her faded cosmetics and tousled hair,
The dried indigo
And her hair-bun like night-glossy cloud.
. . .
Like a willow which contains the spring wind,
Like a flower which is afraid and shy of dews,
You are feeble and limp;
Being unable to stand,
You are helped to your feet by the pretty maids. [36]

Like *Shakuntala*, *Palace of Eternal Life* spends much space depicting the heroine's physical beauty, which functions as a conceptual image justifying love. Other examples of lavish erotic descriptions of her beauty are seen in Act Two:

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Stepping down the golden palace,
I scrutinise her
in the light of the moon and lanterns:
Even the flowers in the courtyard
are not so charming as her.
We caress each other tenderly,
We lean on each other closely,
The shadows of her hair and the shimmer of her dress reflect each other
And portray her mien and charm in myriad ways. [37]

In Act Twenty-four, the emperor asks Lady Yang to sing the song about her own beauty:

LADY YANG.

[35] Act 21, p. 96.
[36] Act 21, p. 97.
[37] Act 2, p. 5.

The abundance of rich-hued flowers suggest her pretty face,
The clouds remind of her radiant dress.
Who can rival her fresh attire?
The poor Lady Swallow has been eclipsed.
Like the precious flower,
The nation's prime beauty,
She smiles faintly oft monarch-ogled.
Facing the vernal breeze,
Releasing her spring sorrow,
She leans on the railing at Eaglewood Pavilion. [38]

In short, beauty as an aesthetic concept takes perceptual image and conceptual image as its media, and through this media seeps itself over all mentions of love and its attendant amorosities or eroticisms, tingeing them with its lofty hues.

Besides *beauty*, both plays use another aesthetic category, ***sublimity***, in the same way and for the same purpose. The way in which it may be differentiated from beauty is that sublimity, endowed with more overwhelming power, more actively obliges people to accept its aesthetic judgement, likewise without argument or any logical induction. Sublimity has more authority, it works on another aspect of human psychology which is related to fear, awe, esteem, reverence and so on, while beauty arouses tender feelings such as affection, sympathy, appreciation, admiration and adoration. Beauty affects us gently in a leisurely manner, but sublimity is overwhelming, adopting an arbitrary position and high profile, and imposing its aesthetic judgement on us with rash vigour.[39]

Sublimity is associated with fierce passion, just as beauty is with tender affection. Violent passion and soft affection form the two major aspects of love. Affection belongs to tender and exquisite feeling, while passion is energetic, vigorous, virile, robust, driving, forceful and august. The former is the femininity of *yin* and the latter the virility of *yang*. It is by beauty that our tender feelings and leisurely moods are generated, while sublimity fiercely stirs up our emotions and agitates our mind, bringing us violently and straightway into feverish passion.[40]

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[38] Act 24, p. 107.

[39] "Sublimity" as an aesthetic conception is generally thought different from what was first advanced by Longinus (1st or 3nd century AD), whose idea is mainly concerned with the styles of diction. Nevertheless, his remarks are still referential to the discussion here. In *On the Sublime* he says: "The effect of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but transport. At every time and in every way imposing speech, with the spell it throws over us, prevails over that which aims at persuasion and gratification. Our persuasions we can control, but the influences of the sublime bring power and irresistible might to bear, and reign supreme over every hearer." "On the Sublime", in Bernard F. Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1974), p. 76.

[40] Cf. Longinus: "First and most important is the power of forming great conceptions. . . . Secondly, there is vehement and inspired passion. These two components of the sublime are for the most part innate." "On the Sublime", in Bernard F. Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, op.

As in the case of beauty, sublimity as an aesthetic concept is configured as perceptual images and conceptual images. As Kant says, "The sublime is not to be sought in the things of nature, but only in our Ideas".[41] In *Shakuntala*, when the king is amazed by Shakuntala's grace and beauty, we read the following:

> King. . . .
> *How could a mortal to such charms give birth?*
> *The lightning's radiance flashes not from earth.*
> *And so my desire has really scope for its indulgence.* [42]

Sublimity here stands in inherent association with the king's passion, and through empathy arouses a similar psychological state in the audience. Two levels should be distinguished in the above quotation. The first level is that of individual perceptual images such as "lightning", "radiance", "earth" and "mortal", and the second level is that of a conceptual image on which the individual images are constructed by the artistry's rationalisings and the structures of language into a new unit. Each perceptual image functions alone, representing an object which arouses the audience's admiration and awe, but when these perceptual images are brought together and form an organism, a system of images, there appears a new image which is in motion as opposed to being static: "The lightning's radiance flashes not from earth". Although this expression is negative in terms of logic and grammar, as seen in its "not from. . .", yet in the artistic sense it has positive effect, because the concept of sublimity has been evoked.[43] Such an imagistic organism

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cit., p. 79; and Kant: "The mind feels itself *moved* in the representation of the Sublime in nature; whilst the Beautiful it is in *restful* contemplation." "Analytical of the Sublime", in his *Kritik of Judgment* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 120.

[41] "Analytical of the Sublime", in his *Kritik of Judgment* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 109.

[42] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 1, p. 34.

[43] This, as an example, supports the idea that, in many cases, "the meaning of a sentence is the sum of the meanings of the words that compose it", which is objected to by Derek Bickerton and repudiated as one of the three major common mistakes. He goes on: "It is significant that when Richards wished to demonstrate the interaction of different levels of understanding in the interpretation of poetry, he should have chosen for his sample the line *Arcadia, Night,* a *Cloud, Pan,* and the *Moon* -- five NPs paratactically linked [Italics original], therefore as free from grammatical relationships (and thus from the semantic co-occurence restrictions these entail) as any extended utterance could be; and should go on to discuss the parts played by 'the visual sensation of the printed words', 'tied images', 'free images', 'references', 'emotions', and 'attitudes'-- anything and everything except syntax. . . . In fact, syntactic structures strongly affect our interpretation, not only of poetry . . . but of all modes of discourse." See Derek Bickerton, "Prolegomena to a Linguistic Theory of Metaphor", in Marvin K L. Ching & others (eds.), *Linguistic Perspectives on Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 47. -- I do not think this repudiation is fair, and in this example of ours, the aesthetic significance is very indifferent to the syntactic and grammatical structure which assume a negative form, viz., "not from", in this case, what is active and vital is a system of images which are constructed and interpreted by the audience irrespective of the syntax.

should be termed conceptual imagery rather than perceptual imagery, because it does not have any physical connection with the particular scene in question, and moreover, as an organic unit it is literally negated, since grammatically negative. Here emerges the difference between literal and figurative meanings, the former being fixed grammatically, that is in a linguistic sense, and the latter being determined artistically, that is in aesthetic sense. Once the individual elements are brought into organic union, they gain a second life, just as isolated words are given connected form by grammar, entirely new meaning being born as a consequence.

There are other striking examples. In Act Three the king manifests his passion as follows (emboldening mine here and further below):

> *. . . Sooner shall* ***the rushing cataract***
> *In foaming eddies re-ascend the steep,*
> *Than my fond heart turn back from its pursuit.*
> God of Love! God of the flowery shafts! we are all of us cruelly deceived by thee, and by the Moon, however deserving of confidence you may both appear.
> *For not to us do there thine arrows seem*
> *Pointed with tender flowerets; not to us*
> *Doth* ***the pale moon irradiate the earth***
> *With beams of silver fraught with cooling dews: --*
> *But on* ***our fevered frames*** *the moon-beams fall*
> *Like* ***darts of fire****, and every flower-tipped shaft*
> *Of Kama*[44]*, as it probes our throbbing hearts,*
> *Seems to be barbed with* ***hardest adamant****.*
> *Ah! I know the reason:*
> *E'en now in thine embodied essence* ***lurks***
> ***The fire of Shiva's anger****,*[45] *like the flame*
> *That ever hidden in* ***the secret depths***
> ***Of ocean****, smolders unseen. How else*
> *Couldst thou all immaterial as thou art,*
> *Was scorched to ashes by* ***a sudden flash***
> ***From the offended god's terrific eye****.*[46]

Building up the picture of fierce passion, a great many perceptual images and conceptual images conveying sublimity are employed, such as "the rushing cataract in foaming eddies re-ascend the steep", "on our fevered frames the moon-beams fall like darts of fire", "every flower-tipped shaft seems to be barbed with hardest adamant", "the fire of Shiva's anger, like the flame that ever hidden in the secret depths of ocean",

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[44] The god of love.

[45] "Always an enemy of austerities, the god Kama was blasted to a cinder by Shiva, whom he angered by reminding of his wife's love." (The editor's original footnote, *Shakuntala*, op. cit.).

[46] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 3, pp. 48-9.

"thou, whose form was scorched to ashes by a sudden flash from the offended god's terrific eye", "the monster-fish", and "death".

The conceptual images not only boost the power of passion, but also effectively put a seal of approval on its value and values. Passion, owing to the tonality of language that has been established, is self-sufficient. That is to say, it can overstep ordinary moral and ethical demarcations yet still demand the reader's or audience's recognition of its majesty and rightness. In this regard, George Santayana states: "What we objectify in the sublime is . . . the glorious joy of self-assertion in the face of the uncontrollable world," and "The sense of the sublime is essentially mystical: it is the transcending of distinct perception in favour of a feeling of unity and volume".[47] The nature of sublimity as described by him is in many ways associated with that of passion. To create this situation of audience recognition, there has been no logical induction or didactic argument. All that has been done so far has been to resort to sublimity in order to sublimate the subject matter and lift it to the absolute. When sexual passion is placed in such a sacrosanct position, it refuses all questioning as to its rightness, and all doubts of its reasonableness are virtually excluded. In other words, it becomes taken for granted, inherently right, and absolute. When passion is worshipped as something absolute, passionism is operative. In strict terms, this too is a device of artistry. More often than not, the impression of veracity and authenticity is not due to induction and fact, but to artistic and rhetorical techniques, such as persuasive reasoning and analogy. In his *Poetics,* while talking about *recognition*, Aristotle points out the trick of using deliberate "false inference", which shows that such tricks used as artistic techniques have been consciously recognised at least since his ancient times. The situation in our plays differs from the case of being not a usage of false logic, since it is one of actual illogicality.[48] The play applies emotional and otherwise loaded language to the topic of passion, taking advantage of the aesthetic concepts of beauty and sublimity, so that a panegyric tonality is established and the text as a whole becomes a eulogy. Such a tonality is subjective, but it sounds objective since the narrator is invisible and the tonalisation depersonalised, so that it sounds instead like an expression of the collective feelings of the community as represented by the

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[47] George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Scribners, 1896), pp. 240 & 243, quoted in F. E. Sparshott, *The Structure of Aesthetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, and, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 77.

[48] Cf. Aristotle: "Again, there is a composite kind of recognition involving false inference on the part of one of the characters, as in the *Odysseus Disguised as a Messenger*. A said < that on one else was able to bent the bow: . . . hence B (the disguised Odysseus) imagined that A would > recognized the bow which, in fact, he had not seen; and to bring about a recognition by this means -- the expectation that A would recognized the bow -- is false inference." "<" and ">" origianl; *Poetics*, in Dukore, Bernard F. (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), XVI, p. 46.

audience.[49] Moreover, through such images as moon, gods, fire, cataract, ocean, the tonality even surpasses the collective human mood and rises nearer to the greater solidity of timeless Nature. The following further illustrates our contentions:

> Priyamvada (aloud). We wish you joy, dear Shakuntala. Your affections are fixed on an object in every respect worthy of you. **The noblest river will unite itself to the ocean**, and the lovely Madhavi-creeper cling naturally to the mango, the only tree capable of supporting it. [50]

In this instance sublimity and beauty coexist, the former being conveyed through "the noble river" and "the ocean", and the latter by the mango tree, creepers and so forth. Again, shortly before the passage quoted above, we read:

> Shakuntala. Ever since that happy moment, my heart's affections have been fixed upon him, and my energy of mind and body have all deserted me, as you see.
> King (with rapture). *Her own lips have uttered the words I most longed to hear.*
> *Love **lit the flame**, and Love himself allays*
> ***My burning fever**, as when **gathering clouds***
> *Rise o'er **the earth** in **summer's dazzling noon**,*
> *And grateful showers dispel the morning heat.* [51]

Here the humanised force of Nature and the cosmic objects with their august magnificence help Love approach sublimity and transport human feelings onto the supra-human plane. The same is also true of the following:

> King. Why need we wonder if **the beautiful constellation Vishakha** pines to be united with **the Moon**. [52]

Easily discerned here is the deliberate device of linking love to supra-human phenomena and placing it on a par with the vast cosmos. The association of sublimity with love and passion is unmistakable, even when but subtly introduced. For instance, in Act Two, the king who has fallen deeply in love with Shakuntala issues a mandate:

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[49] Kant firmly holds that the aesthetic judgment is of "the necessity of **the universal agreement**". Ememboldeningenings mine, see chs. 1, 2, 3, etc., *passim*, in *Kritik of Judgment* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892); also cf.: "It is only in this respect (a reference which is natural to every man and which every man postulates in others as a duty) that it [the beautiful] gives pleasure with a claim for **the agreement of every one else**." Emboldenings mine, see "Of Beauty as the symbol of Morality", ibid., pp. 150-1.

[50] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 3, p. 52; emboldenings mine.

[51] Ibid., emboldenings mine.

[52] Ibid., emboldenings mine.

King. . . . My troops must not be allowed to disturb this sacred retreat, and irritate its pious inhabitants.

Know that within the calm and cold recluse
Lurks unperceived a germ of ***smothered flame,***
All-potent to destroy; ***a latent fire***
That rashly kindled ***bursts with fury forth:--***
As in the disc of crystal that remains
Cool to the touch, until ***the solar ray***
Falls on its polished surface, and excites
The burning heat *that lies within concealed.* [53]

The function of the lines quoted above may be explained from various angles, one being that of characterisation, and another that of the aesthetic concept of sublimity. In the first case, the passage reveals the king's sense of morality, thus reinforcing his image as a perfection or paragon. He is a wise monarch and also a perfect person. He has strong senses of justice, morality, conscience and obligation, and always values his people's interests high above anything else. So in many ways, he, as an individual, is or represents both his nation and the populace he governs, as could be fully expounded by studies of his characterisation. The question, however, of why so many components conveying sublimity are resorted to and so densely, can only be answered from the second angle. It is apparent that they are, strictly speaking, irrelevant to the thematic aspect of the play, but it is by using these sublime components as its medium that sublimity as an aesthetic concept is able to cast its light over love and passion. Following on in this line of logic, other similar phenomena can also be explained. Let us look at the following:

Priyamvada and Anasuya. You undervalue your own merits, dear Shakuntala. What man in his senses would intercept with the skirt of his robe **the bright rays of the autumnal moon, which alone can allay the fever of his body**?[54]

King. . . .

Scarce is my soul delivered from the cloud
That darkened its remembrance of the past,
When lo! the heart-born deity of love
With yonder blossom of the mango barbs
Hid keenest shaft, and aims it at my breast. [55]

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[53] Ibid., Act 2, pp. 39-40; emboldenings mine.
[54] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 3, p. 53; emboldenings mine.
[55] Ibid., Act 6, p. 95.

The concept of sublimity is utilised by *Palace of Eternal Life* in a manner similar to its use in *Shakuntala*. Sublimity is ushered forth and makes contact with the audience right at the beginning of the play:

> *Love --*
> *Moves* ***metal*** *and* ***stone****,*
> *Swirls* ***heaven*** *and* ***earth****,*
> *Shines with* ***the white sun****,*
> *Is preserved in* ***the "green" histories****.*[56]

From such grandeur of conceptual images we feel a sublimity, a kind of cosmic power and superhuman force mingled with a sort of mysticism, whereby, again, personal romantic passion transcends individuality and personality, elevates itself to universality, and expands itself into objectivity. This confirms Kant's statement: "The sublime is not to be sought in the things of nature, but only in our Ideas".[57]

In order to achieve such an effect, an objective intonation of commentary is adopted. This first act consists of just one monologue, which is delivered by a special quasi-*persona* who stands outside the dramatic conflict and incidents of the plot but still belongs to the play as a whole performance. He delivers his lines and monopolises the whole act, but never reappears in the later acts. He is referred to as *mo* by the stage direction, which is not so much a type of character as a generalised male role category of conventionalised acting. We might simply term him "the prologue". Because this monologue of his stands apart from the action of the play proper, this initial act is narrative rather than dramatic, and the narrator is none other than the configuration of objectivity and the incarnation of philosophical attitudes that provide comment on the fates of humans. His monologue being filled with sublimity, from the very start of the drama the subject matter of the protagonist's fierce desire and blind passion is consequently coloured in advance with exalted grandeur, and through this process the play's assessment of love is also changed to view and convey it as something depersonalised and universalised.

Very similarly to what occurs in *Shakuntala*, awesome cosmic phenomena of power, grandeur and majesty are laden with subjective and human implications. Where the sun, the earth, Heaven and so on are concerned, this drama employs another, somewhat different process of sublimation, and, parallel to depersonalisation, this process may be termed "objectification". It is a transcending of ego and individuality to

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[56] Early Chinese books were made of bamboo strips for paper. *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 1, p. 1; emboldenings mine.

[57] "Analytical of the Sublime", in his *Kritik of Judgment* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 109.

collectivity and universality, and involves the turning of love's passion from a matter of free will into a law which demands obedience and by its rationality rejects all doubts.

This drama, too, often employs objects relating to Nature for its perceptual and conceptual images of sublimity. For instance, sun and moon, and Heaven and Earth are used as frequently as flower and willow for the perceptual and conceptual imagery of beauty:

> *If in Heaven,*
> *We wish to be paired birds,*
> *Flying wing to wing;*
> *If on Earth,*
> *We hope to be twin trees,*
> *Interfusing branch with branch.*
> *Heaven is eternal,*
> *Earth is perpetual,*
> *And even were they to come to an end,*
> *This vow will last enduringly,*
> *Never will it be terminated.* [58]

In Act Two, the following lines are repeated three times:

> *Let it be eternal as the Earth*
> *and perpetual as Heaven.*[59]

In the same act we read the following:

> *We look up with awe and admiration!*
> *The sun is circumfused by dragon-scales,*
> *The clouds drift with pheasant-tails,*
> *His heavenly face smiles at her newly dressed person.* [60]

> *Night after night,*
> *She weeps toward the stars,*
> *Pressing her chest,*
> *She cries up to the moon.*
> . . .
> *Though she can't, via the bright rainbow,*
> *Ascend to the Celestial Capital,*
> *The purple ether has broken through into the Earthly Palace.* [61]

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[58] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 22, p. 102.
[59] Ibid., Act 2, pp. 4, 4, 4 &4 - 5.
[60] Ibid., Act 2, p. 4.
[61] Ibid., Act 33, p. 149.

The firm passion tempers the solid golden pills adamant. [62]
She will be raised to the fairy land,
Then will both Heaven and Earth's regrets be remedied. [63]

In the same scene, the necromancer sings as he searches for her soul:

I could tramp Fountain Terrace to pieces,
I could wear the vault of the firmament round.
However,
The wild hurricane blows away the kite with the string snapped,
The dawn mist has been dispelled by the clear sunshine. [64]

In Act Twenty-one, when the description of their passion is rendered redolent with beauty, it is at the same time infused with sublimity:

How they wish the spring fountain could be turned over and used up![65]
How they wish the jade mountain would be washed away! [66]
. . .
The waves shine with warmth,
The shadow of the sun scintillates, [67]
A pair of dragons sporting together come up out of the pool.[68]
A King Xiang is so thirsty that nearly
He falls to the foot of Sun Terrace,
Just as the nymph has returned with the evening rain. [69]

Beauty and sublimity assume various forms apart from those of perceptual image and conceptual image. They are, for example, configured as special scenes devoted to them. Beauty is more active and ubiquitous than sublimity, and this is especially true of *Palace of Eternal Life*. In this play, beauty as an aesthetic ethos is embodied in

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[62] *Qing-jian lian-chu jindan gu*. This is a complicated metaphor: like fire, her passion fierce and firm can temper even golden pills which is supposed to be adamant.

[63] *Deng-xian ba ren-tian hen bu*. This means both mortals and immortals feel regretful for the tragedy of love. Act 33, p. 150.

[64] Act 46, p. 205.

[65] *Chunquan fan jie*. This ambiguity bears sexual implications, "spring fountain" may refers to his sexual organ.

[66] *Yushan xitui*. Also highly erotic. "Jade mountain" may refer to her body.

[67] *Ri ying hui*. It is not clear cut, the character *ying* for shadow is ignored by Yang Xianyi in his translation which goes:" . . . under the shining sun, . . ." See *The Palace of Eternal Life*, translated by Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1955), p. 128. My understanding is, the sun is too bright to see it clearly, so its shape looks like a shadow but bright.

[68] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 21, p. 96.

[69] Alludes to *Gaotang-fu* by Song Yu (late period of the Warring State): King Xiang dreamt of a lady and making love with her, and was told that she was a nymph in the Witch Mount (*Wushan*), in the morning she appeared as clouds, and in the evening as rain.

perceptual or conceptual imagery, proceeding from which it is then expanded into a special scene devoted to it, this in turn eventually being extended through an entire act to form an overall atmosphere of beauty. In quite a few acts of *Palace of Eternal Life*, beauty prevails and takes precedence over anything else such as action and plot because of its intrinsic rapport with the romantic theme. This prevalence is intimately connected with the lyricism that so saliently characterises Chinese and Indian drama, and explains why one's first and immediate impression of the play is of its almost overflowing abundance of beauty. Those issues may effectively carry the above arguments further on to a higher level, but they, however, do deserve the space of another discourse.

Part Three. Underlying Historical Influences on Linguistic and Rhetorical Aspects

In order to achieve the amorous atmosphere required by the dramatic theme, many references to, and analogies for, love are achieved by rhetorical techniques such as symbolisation, personification, metaphor and metonym. In this regard, a common feature of both *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala* is to set up a correspondence between love as a social phenomenon and the natural world, so that love as a subjective consciousness is thus cast wider, extending into its Natural environment. Such a Natural world includes the following elements:

1. Plants: Flowers in general, willow, mango tree, keshara-tree, wining creeper, grass, lotus, etc.;

2. Wildlife: Birds realistic and supernatural, such as mandarin teal, cuckoo, oriole, phoenix, etc.;

3. The Elements: Wind, breeze, rain, cloud, lightning, etc.;

4. Geographical features: River, ocean, hill, mountain, etc.;

5. Heavenly bodies: Star, sun, moon, the Milky Way (known as *yinhe*, "the Silver River" and so on in Chinese), etc..

6. Other sometimes substantial and sometimes metaphorical things: Fragrance, jade, gold, etc.

The creation of this Natural world is a process of "naturisation" of romantic subjectivity, which entails personal feelings' finding sustenance in the natural world. It is opposite, but also complementary, to "personification", the endowment of non-human beings or inanimate objects with human or human-like personality or traits of personality.

Although the correspondence between subjectivity and objectivity is created by rhetoric, the following analysis is not mainly a linguistic study on rhetorical figures and techniques, but an attempt to probe beneath the rhetorical surface, in order to find the historical roots and cultural sediment determining the linguistic subconscious and to identify the influences of convention as opposed to the products of creativity and

originality. In spite of their wide variety, rhetorical expressions can be classified into a few semantic categories, of which the most frequently used is that of plants. *Shakuntala* is very much bound up with trees and tree-associated plants, especially the mango tree and twining creeper, while *Palace of Eternal Life* in general favours flowers much more.

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Making copious and intimate use of plants, *Shakuntala* carries forward the impulses of ancient animism, beliefs and attitudes that pervaded pristine human societies and perhaps will always haunt the peripheries of the human subconscious. Examples of this are the following:

> Priyamavada. Dear Shakuntala, prithee, rest in that attitude one moment.
> Shakuntala. Why so?
> Priyamavada. **The keshara-tree**, whilst your graceful form bends about its stem, appears as if it were wedded to some lovely **twining creeper**.
> Shakuntala. Ah! saucy girl, you are most appropriately named Priyamavada ("Speaking of flattering things").
> King. What Priyamavada says, though complimentary, is nevertheless true. . . .
> Anasuya. See, dear Shakuntala, there is **the young jasmine**, which you named "**the Moonlight of the Grove**", **the self-elected wife of the mango-tree**. Have you forgotten it?
> Shakuntala. Rather will I forget myself. (Approaching the plant and looking at it.) How delightful is the season when **the jasmine-creeper** and **the mango-tree** seem thus to unite in mutual embraces! **The fresh newly-formed shoots of the mango appear to make it her natural protector.**
> (Continues gazing at it.)
> Priyamvada. (Smiling.) Do you know, my Anasuya, why Shakuntala gazes so intently at **the jasmine**?
> Anasuya. No, indeed, I cannot imagine. I pray thee tell me.
> Priyamvada. She is wishing that **as the jasmine is united to a suitable tree**, so in like manner she may obtain a husband worthy of her.[1]

> Priyamavada. . . . We wish you joy, dear Shakuntala. Your affection is fixed on an object in every respect worthy of you. . . . **the madhavi-creeper clings naturally to the mango**, the only tree capable of supporting it.[2]

> Shakuntala (recollecting herself). My father, let me, before I go, **bid adieu to my pet jasmine, the Moonlight of the Grove.** I love the plant almost as a sister.
> Kanva. Yes, yes, my child, I remember **thy sisterly affection for the creeper**. Here it is on the right.

[1] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 1, pp. 27-8. Emboldenings here and subsequent are mine.
[2] Ibid, Act 3, p. 52.

Shakuntala (approaching the jasmine). My beloved **jasmine**, most brilliant of climbing plants. How sweet it is to see **thee cling thus fondly to thy husband**, the mango-tree; yet prithee, turn **thy twining arms** for a moment in this direction **to embrace thy sister**; she is going far away, and may never see thee again.[3]

Kanva. . . . *As now*
Thy favorite jasmine twines its loving arm
Around the sturdy mango. *Leave thou it*
To its protector -- e'en as I consign
Thee to thy lord, and henceforth from my mind
Banish all anxious thought on thy behalf. [4]

The rhetorical category can readily be identified. It is important to point out that the phenomena are not purely linguistic, but related to the broad social context and, even further back, to the cultural tradition. It would be too simplistic of the sophisticated modern man to conclude that such conjugal relationship is mainly metaphorical and figurative. In this regard, Frazer affords us a complex of examples from various nations and times:

> The conception of trees and plants as animated beings naturally results in treating them as male and female, who can be married to each other in a real, and not merely a figurative or poetical sense of the word. Thus, in India, shrubs and trees are formally wedded to each other or to idols. In the North-West Provinces of India a marriage ceremony is performed in honour of a newly planted orchard; . . . On Christmas Eve German peasants used to tie fruit-trees together with straw ropes to make them bear fruit, saying that the trees were thus married. In the Moluccas, when the clove-trees are in blossom, they are treated like pregnant women. . . . So in Amboyna, when the rice is in bloom, the people say that it is pregnant. . . . The Javanese also regard the bloom on the rice as a sign that the plant is pregnant; . . . In Orissa, also, growing rice is "considered as a pregnant woman, and the same ceremonies are observed with regard to it as in the case of human females." [5]

In this light, the following lines should be regarded as no artistic exaggeration but authentically realistic:

Kanva. *Hear me,* ***ye trees*** *that surround our hermitage!*
Shakuntala never moistened in the stream
Her own parched lips, till she had fondly poured
Its purest water on your thirsty roots;
And oft, when she would fain have decked her hair,
She robbed you not e'en of a single flower.
Her highest joy was ever to behold

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[3] Ibid, p. 69.
[4] Ibid.
[5] J. G. Frazer, "Tree-worship", pp. 166-244, passim, in his *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, 2nd ed., (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1900), vol. 1, pp. 176-8.

The early glory of your opening buds:
Oh, then dismiss her with a kind farewell!
This very day she quit her father's home,
To seek the palace of her wedded lord.[6]

It might be very difficult, from a viewpoint of modern civilisation, to take these words in any literal, rather than literary, sense, but again, Frazer may dispel our quandary over this by the statement below:

> If trees are animate, they are necessarily sensitive. When an oak is being felled "it gives a kind of shriekes [sic] or groanes [sic], that may be heard a mile off. . .". The Ojebways "very seldom cut down green or living trees, from the idea that it puts them to pain, and some of their medicine-men profess to have heard the wailing of the trees under the axe." Old peasants in some parts of Austria. . .will not allow an incision to be made in the bark without special cause; . . . In felling a tree they beg its pardon. . . . [In ancient India] When the tree had fallen, he poured butter on the stump,. . . Then he anointed the severed stem and wound a rope of grass round it. . . . In Samoa there was a grove of trees which no one dared hew down. Once some strangers tried to do so, but blood flew from the tree, and the sacrilegious strangers fell ill and died. Down to 1859 there stood a sacred larch-tree at Nauders in the Tyrol which was thought to bleed whenever it was cut; . . .[7]

Thus leaving the linguistic aspect aside, one obtains a strong feeling that these lines bear the *imprimatur* of primeval animism, expressing ideas having close affinity to the ways of thinking that we see reflected in ancient myths and the thinking of primtive peoples. It would be totally wrong to regard these examples as simply a linguistic matter, and it is very likely that vegetation in the lines cited is literally considered as having spirit and soul. This point may be supported by the universal phenomena of tree worship.[8]

In this play the animist elements are applied to the idea of love, and the natural world painted in the play is animated with a romantic spirit so as to produce a pervading atmosphere of amorousness. The notion of life is symbolised by a plant, there being "the mystical relations between tree and men", "between the two levels -- vegetal and human".[9] This accords with ancient Indian culture and may also be corroborated by Indian custom past and present, the "marriages of trees", which are "practised on a large scale in India, presupposing that the wedding of two different plant species can have an influence on the woman's fertility."[10] One generally anticipates that the linguistic features

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[6] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 68.

[7] Frazer, James George. "Tree-worship", pp. 166-244, passim, in his *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, pp. 172-4.

[8] Cf. J. G. Frazer, "Tree-worship", pp. 166-244, passim, in his *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, op. cit.

[9] Mircea Eliade, "Vegetation · 133. The Myth of Man's Descent from a Plant Species", in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), pp. 300 & 302.

[10] Mircea Eliade, "Vegetation · 177. The Marriage of the Tree", in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, op. cit., p. 308.

of literature will reflect, to a large extent at least, the author's particular mode of thinking and the characteristics of his philosophical outlook, so that such frequent use of this rhetorical type reveals a special way in which ancient Indians comprehended the concept of love, and also reflects the more exuberant sexual attitudes of more unsophisticated, more innocent times. The perceptual images are nuanced with deliberately archaic colour that, although mixed with creative freshness, echoes and stresses the corresponding innocence, simplicity and heady mystique of the outlook on love and sexuality which the playwright seeks to convey. In this connection, Balwant Gargi says:

> Kalidasa has an uncanny perception of nature. Through his descriptions we see the fleeing deer and the fast-moving chariot, inhale the familiar smells of rich foliage and hear the sounds of the forest. By the magic of his poetry he turns inanimate objects into living beings. . . . Master of metaphor and simile, he fixed each image in our minds as goldsmith fixes a jewel in a diadem.[11]

This is not to say that the playwright necessarily regarded ancient mythology and its attitudes with genuine belief or took them as having literal validity. The use of them, however, does possibly highlight to some extent subconscious historical and cultural linkages that existed in his mind. Nor was this authorial phenomenon confined to this work, for indeed other Sanskrit dramas drawing their subject matter from myths also bear linguistic colouring resembling that of the myths. This being so, such linguistic qualities may be considered a cultural trait with roots in a collective attitude of the Indians of that historical period, the era of ancient Sanskrit drama.[12] In this light, even if he has passed the age of the mythological civilisation and is fully conscious of the falsehood of animism, Kalidasa is still bound to the complex of the rhetorical figures through an unconscious attitude that is personal and also collective in nature.[13]

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[11] Balwant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962), p. 31.

[12] Vegetation-cults worship features in the ancient Indian culture. The tree plays a vital role in ancient Indian cultural categories such as religion, philosophy and others; Mircea Eliade says: "Indian tradition, according to its earliest writings [e. g. AV, ii, 7, 3,; x, 38; etc. -- original footnote], represents the cosmos in the form of a giant tree. This idea is defined fairly formally in the Upanisads: the Universe is an inverted tree, burying its roots in the sky and spreading its branches over the whole earth. . . . The Katha-Upanisads describes it like this: 'This eternal Asvattha, whose roots rise on high, and whose branches grow low, is the pure [*sukram* -- original annotation], is the Brahman, is what we call the Non-Death. All the worlds rest in it!'. . . Other texts from the Upanisads restate still more clearly this notion of the cosmos as a tree. 'Its branches are the ether, the air, fire, water, earth', etc. [*Maitri Up.*, vi. 7. -- original footnote] The natural elements are the expression of this 'Braham whose name is Asvattha'. . . . In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the cosmic tree comes to express not only the universe, but also man's condition in the world. . . . The whole universe, as well as the experience of man who lives in it and is not detached from it, are here symbolized by the cosmic tree." Mircea Eliade, "Vegetation · 99. The Cosmic Tree", in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, op. cit., pp. 273-4.

[13] Cf. Carl G. Jung (1875-1961): "I am assuming that the work of art we propose to analyse, as well as being symbolic, has its source not in the *personal unconscious* of the poet, but in a sphere of unconscious

In *Shakuntala*, the linguistic application of what resembles animism is not confined to plants, but extends to animals. This, as in the case of vegetation, accords with the ancient manner of thinking left over from primitive times. Frazer says:

> In practice, as in folk-tales, it is not merely with inanimate objects and plants that a person is occasionally believed to be united by a bond of physical sympathy. The same bond, it is supposed, may exist between a man and an animal, so that the welfare of the one depends on the welfare of the other.[14]

Shakuntala, however, is not confined to occasional particular cases, but is permeated with a wide range of pan-animism. Birds, the fawn and other animals are accorded personalities, feelings and souls like human beings, and being thus endowed with human psyche are indeed "personifications". Such personification, however, is used so commonly in this play that one might preferably employ a term that envisages the process the other way round, "naturisation", this being in some ways the reverse process, whereby in fact personality is broadly perceived through nature, which exactly fits the situation in *Shakuntala*:

> Shakuntala. . . . See, see, dear Anasuya, the poor female Chakravaka-bird, whom cruel fate dooms to nightly separation from her mate, calls to him in mournful notes from the other side of the stream, though he is only hidden from her view by the spreading leaves of the water-lily. Her cry is so piteous that I could almost fancy she was lamenting her hard lot in intelligible words.
>
> Absasuya. Say not so, dearest.
>
> *Fond bird! though sorrow lengthen out* ***her plight***
> ***Of widowhood****, yet with a cry of joy*
> *She hails the morning light that brings her mate*
> *Back to her side. The agony of parting*
> *Would wound us like the hope of future meeting.* [15]

> Priyamavada (glancing on one side). See, Anasuya, there is our favorite **little fawn** running about in great distress, and turning its eye in every direction as if looking for its mother; come, let us help the little thing to find her.[16]

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mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of mankind. I have called this sphere the *collective unconscious*, . . . The collective unconscious is not to be thought of as a self-subsistent entity; it is no more that a potentiality handed down to us from primordial times in the specific form of mnemonic images inherited in the anatomical structure of the brain." "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry", in Bernard F. Dukore, (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), pp. 844-5.

[14] G. J. Frazer, "The External Soul in Animals", in his *The Golden Bough: Balder the Beautiful* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), vol. 1, p. 196.

[15] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 71.

[16] Ibid., Act 3, p. 55.

These two examples give us a clue to the tie between such rhetorical factors and the idea that human beings and the natural world are spiritually akin, the basis for animism. Such an idea draws no line, as does modern man, between mankind and its natural surroundings, so that the bird and fawn are both viewed as the dramatic characters' friends and companions, essentially as members of the same species as mankind, and their feelings and personality are understood to be humanly amorous. In the play, such a harmony between human beings and animals and plants exists so generally that it should not be considered to be incidental or coincidental. The following examples confirm the prevalence of this idea in the play:

Kanva. *My daughter,*
It is ***the little fawn, thy foster-child,***
Poor helpless orphan*! it remembers well*
How with ***a mother's tenderness and love***
Thou didst protect it, and with grains of rice
From thine own hand didst daily nourish it;
And, ever and anon, when some sharp thorn
Had pierced its mouth, how gently thou didst tend
The bleeding wound, and pour in healing balm.
The grateful nursling clings to its protectress,
Mutely imploring leave to follow her. [17]

Voice (singing behind the scenes.)
How hither didst you rove,
Sweet bee, to kiss the mango's cheek;
Oh! leave not, then thy early love,
The lily's honeyed lip to seek.[18]

King (gazing at Shakuntala. Aside.) . . .
I can never believe
She is my wedded wife; ***and like a bee***
That circles round the flower *whose nectared cup*
Teems with the dew of morning, I must pause
Ere eagerly I taste the proffered sweetness.[19]

Animism is generally an unsophisticated view of the world, such as one finds or would expect to find in uncivilised societies or societies in their early stages of social complexity, or indeed in the minds of children and the less formally educated in general. In this way it can be used artistically by authors or used because it is the basic attitude of

[17] Ibid., Act 4, p. 70.
[18] Ibid., Act 5, p. 75.
[19] Ibid., Act 5, p. 81.

the times which they partake. In its artistic uses, subjectivity is allowed or encouraged to take precedence over the objective world and to attempt to build up a special kind of composite understanding which combines such opposites as the man-made artistic and the supernatural. Employed in literature, animism largely relies on imagination and its narrative uses sensory perceptual images, but it also has a supernatural side which seeks to transcend ordinary phenomena and answer primary questions concerning Man and Nature. Dealing with such a vital topic as love between the sexes, one that invites a high degree of both philosophical and aesthetic thinking, there is a need to deal with both sensory and rational perceptions alike, and animism meets this need quite naturally. Animism embraces not only organic creatures, but also the whole inanimate universe. In this play, most if not all natural objects are given not only life, but also character and personality. Where love comes in question, they are heavily imbued with amorousness, and animated by affections and passions.

> Priyamavada. . . . We wish you joy, dear Shakuntala. Your affections are fixed on an object in every respect worthy of you. **The noblest river** will unite itself to **the ocean**, and the lovely Madhavi-creeper clings naturally to the mango, the only tree capable of supporting it.[20]

> King. Why need we wonder if **the beautiful constellation Wishakha pines to be united with the moon.**[21]

> King. God of love! God of the flowery shafts! we are all of us cruelly deceived by thee, and by the Moon, however deserving of confidence you may both appear.
>
> *For not to us do these arrows seem*
> *Pointed with flowerets; not to us*
> *Doth* ***the pale moon*** *irradiate* ***the earth***
> *With beams of silver fraught with* ***cooling dew****: --*
> *But on our fevered frames* ***the moon-beams*** *fall*
> *Like darts of fire, and every flower-tipped shift*
> *Of Kama, as it probes our throbbing heart*
> *Seems to be barbed with hardest adamant.*
>
> Adorable god of love! hast thou no pity for me? (In a tone of anguish.) How can thy arrows be so sharp when they are pointed with flowers? Ah! I know the reason:
>
> *E'en now in thine embodied essence lurk*
> *The fire of Shiva's anger, like the flame*
> *That ever hidden in the secret depths*
> *Of* ***ocean****, smolders there unseen . . .*[22]

[20] Ibid., Act 3, p. 52.
[21] Ibid.
[22] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 3, p. 48.

Kalidasa addresses himself to a universe where lots of inanimate beings are breathed with spirit and animated with personality. This is an extension of animism which leads to *naturism* as the opposite to *animism*. Against this is set the broad philosophical background of the harmony between Man and Nature which is a strong feature of Hindu religious belief.[23] There are two distinct and complementary kinds of animisation. Sometimes the non-human is metamorphosed into a person. Sometimes a human sentiment is projected onto a being of Nature and thereby given objective form. The former case is a linguistic and rhetorical rather than a supernatural device, whereas the latter is precisely the contrary. On some occasions, moreover, the two are hard to distinguish form each other, a difficulty that further confirms the closeness of the notional connection between rhetorical figures of language and philosophical concepts of the supernatural.

In all examples above, a balance is maintained between the rhetorical and the supernatural. All the same, this balance is often disturbed, which so inclines the diction towards rhetoric that a passage may virtually become a rhetorical unit. For example:

> Kanva. ***Hear me, ye trees*** *that surround our hermitage!*
> *Shakuntala never moistened in the stream*
> *Her own parched lips, till she had fondly poured*
> *Its purest water on your thirsty roots;*
> *And oft, when she would fain have decked her hair*
> *With your thick-clustering blossoms, in her love*
> *She robbed you not e'en of single flower.*
> *Her highest joy was ever to behold*
> *The early glory of your opening buds:*
> *Oh, then, dismiss her with a kind farewell!*

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[23] Cf. Emile Durkheim: "There is no religious system, ancient or recent, where one does not meet, under different forms, two religions, as it were, side by side, which, though being united closely and mutually penetrating each other, do not cease, nevertheless, to be distinct. The one addresses itself to the phenomena of nature, either the great cosmic forces, such as winds, rivers, stars or the sky, etc., or else the objects of various sorts which cover the surface of the earth, such as plants, animals, rocks, etc.; for this reason it has been given the name of *naturism*. The other has spiritual beings as its object, spirits, souls, geniuses, demons, divinities properly so-called, animated and conscious agents like man, but distinguished from him, nevertheless, by the nature of their powers and especially by the peculiar characteristic that they do not affect the senses in the same way: ordinarily they are not visible to human eyes. This religion of spirits is called *animism*. Now, to explain the universal co-existence of these two sorts of cults, two contradictory theories have been proposed. For some, animism is the primitive religion, of which naturism is only a secondary and derived form. For the others, on the contrary, it is the nature cult which was the point of departure for religious evolution; the cult of spirits is only a peculiar case of that." *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, translated from the French by Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1954), pp. 48-9; and also: "Since these spirits were of human origin, they interested themselves only in the life of men and were thought to act only upon human events. It is still to be explained how other spirits were imagined to account for the other phenomena of the universe and how the cult of nature was subsequently formed beside that of the ancestors." Ibid., pp. 52-3.

. . .

Hark! heard'st thou not the answer of the trees,
Our sylvan sister, warbled in the note
Of the melodious Köil they dismiss
Their dear Shakuntala with loving wishes.[24]

This quotation can be viewed from two angles. The first concerns the manner of Kanva's addressing the tree and bird, and the second the content of his speech. As far as the former is concerned, his addressing of the tree and bird may be more rhetorical and dramatic. It does not have very much to do with animism, because on this occasion he may not suppose the tree can really hear him as does a person, for all that he is generally depicted as having an animistic bent of mind and believing that plants have a personality and soul.[25] Nonetheless, the content of his speech is very much in animist vein. Shakuntala's tenderness and kindness towards the tree is quite the same as that for a sister, the tree being in effect her "sylvan sister".

Occasionally the diction breaks away from its apparent animism and inclines toward the purely rhetorical, as in the case below:

King. *The peerless maid* ***is like*** *a fragrant flower,*

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[24] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 68.

[25] Even in this case, it would not at all be absurd to think that Kanva believes the tree can really hear him, and to dismiss queries about this, I quote the following from Frazer, "Tree-worship", in his *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, vol. 1, op. cit..

(i). "In the Yasawu islands of Fiji a man will never eat a cocoa-nut without first asking its leave, 'May I eat you, my chief?'" (p. 170).

(ii). "Near Jugra in Selangor there is a small grove of durian-trees, and on a specially chosen day the villagers used to assemble in it. Thereupon one of the local sorcerers would take a hatchet and deliver several shrewd blows on the trunk of the most barren of the trees, saying, 'Will you now bear fruit or not? If you do not, I shall fell you.'"(p. 174).

(iii). "In Lesbos, when an orange-tree or a lemon-tree does not bear fruit, the owner will sometimes set a looking-glass before the tree; then standing with an axe in his hand over against the tree and gazing at its reflection in the glass he will feign to fall into a passion and will say aloud, 'Bear fruit, or I'll cut you down.' " (p. 175).

(iv). "Before the Ilocanes of Luzon cut down trees in the virgin forest or on the mountains, they recite some verses to the following effect: 'Be not uneasy, my friend, though we fell what we have been ordered to fell.'" (p. 173).In Ancient India, "when the tree had fallen, he poured butter on the stump, saying, "Lord of the forest, grow with a hundred branches; may we grow with a thousand branches." (p. 173).

These are not purely ritualistic occurences, just as in our play the addressing of trees is not purely linguistic and rhetorical adornment.

Also cf. Colin Wilson: "This notion of 'vegetable soul' [transmitted to whatever plants by the "vegetable stone"] cannot be dismissed as unscientific. It is thoroughly consistent with the discoveries about the 'blueprint of life' [a certain order or structure of minerals] made by Harold Burr, and supported by Kirlian photography. It is also worth bearing in mind that these principles were first formulated by the Chinese more than two thousand years ago in the science they called macrobiotics, which in turn became alchemy." "The Great Secret", in his *Mysteries: An investigation into the occult, the paranormal and the supernatural* (Graft Books, 1978), p. 426.

Whose perfumed breath has never been diffused;
A tender bud, that no profaning hand had dared to sever from its parent stalk;
A gem of priceless water, just released
Or may the maiden compare
To the sweetest honey, that no mortal lip
Has sipped; or , rather to the mellowed fruit
Of virtuous actions in some former birth,
Now brought to full perfection?[26]

In this dialogue there are figures which are simply general rhetoric ones, such as simile or metaphor, with no special pertaining to animistic outlooks. It is worth noting, in passing, the rhetorical timbre is in an intrinsic association with the ancient Indian philosophical outlook on the rapport between Man and Nature, as Scott says:

> A central tenet of Hindu belief has been the sublimation of individual thought with a timeless, universal spirit. It came from the deeply held conviction that man was a part of nature, neither its master nor its slave, but fundamentally united with it.[27]

*

If one studies *Palace of Eternal Life* closely, one sees that *personification* and *naturisation* are likewise copiously employed, and that most references to love are couched as active rhetorical figures, basically dependent on semantic colouring. In this way, the play avails itself of many tangible objects of the natural world to provide analogies for the abstract and more amorphous concepts of romantic love. The difference between the two plays here is that the historical sediment in *Palace of Eternal Life* is mainly of conscious linguistic substance, of rhetoric's semantics, not primarily supernatural or animistic.

Various references to love in this play are created through linguistic conventions and constitute variations on rhetorical clichés, in other words derive from certain archetypes, some of which are fixed commonplace idioms (*chengyu*: "set-phrases" or "ready-made phrases"). The artistic deliberation and conscious literary effort involved in their embellishment are clearly perceptible, since this work was created in a more sophisticated phase of history and culture, without background that encouraged the spontaneous and even unconscious use of animism in *Shakuntala.*

As the play builds up its amorous atmosphere, love as an ontological entity is referred to directly, hinted at, implied and symbolised by a great variety of linguistic devices. By this wide variety, the play not only avoids the monotony of repetition, but

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[26] *Shakuntala*, op. Cit., Act 2, p. 41.
[27] A. C. Scott, *The Theatre of Asia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), p. 26.

intensifies the amorous aura through the interaction of love as expressed subjectively by the characters and its objective equivalents in the non-human world.

The Nature references to love in the play may be classified into the following types:

(1). Flower.

Flowers such as peony, crab-apple, lotus blossom, peach blossom, plum blossom, cassia blossom and so forth, are employed as visual references for romantic concepts. Unlike in *Shakuntala*, however, very few of them are genuinely personified to acquire animistic qualities. In most cases flowers are simply referred to as *hua* "flower", the general straightforward term, and the diction concerning it does not go into detailed descriptions, so that the flower thus remains little more than an abstract concept, lacking visual vividness and individuality, let alone any personality. More often than not, there is not even any particular flower named, such as the peony or crab-apple, all that is mentioned being a "flower", conveying the ideas associated with that appellation, and constituting an perceptual image that is quite other than an animistic one. It is sought to stress this point here by the very quantity of examples:

LADY YANG.
May we ask how many ***crab-apple trees***
TOGETHER.
Blossomed *over night?*[28]

COLD REED.
. . . That Lady Yang --
Like ***crab-apple blossom*** *in its sound sleep,*
Gains even more charm and delicacy.[29]

TOGETHER. . . .
The tree lives for thousands of years long
bearing twin peaches,
The ***blossoms*** *open over a hundred feet expanse*
sharing the same lotus stem.[30]

LADY YANG.
The ***blossoms*** *and their twigs are toying with the gauze screened window.*[31]

[28] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 16.
[29] Ibid., Act 11, p. 60.
[30] Ibid., Act 16, p. 92.
[31] Ibid., Act 16, p. 91.

The first example is close to a metaphor, the second obviously a simile, the third has symbolic meaning, and the last is a descriptive statement, helping to create a mood, but not strongly rhetorical. All show a decided distance from the spontaneity of animism. This shows the distance from the spontaneity of animism, being tinged with the rational air of more purely literary creativity.

Many like examples are available from the play. As distinct from those in *Shakuntala*, in their use of established literary conventions to express notions or moods of love, they are reliant upon linguistic habits that have gradually accumulated through the ages by the efforts and inspirations of many individual authors and poets over a huge span of history, creating a solid collective rhetorical consciousness.[32] The flower peony, for instance, has been used countless times through many eras as a metaphor or simile for a beautiful woman so that an amorous nuance has indelibly suffused it. It is also referred to as "heavenly perfume" (*tianxiang*), and often paired with another compound, "national beauty" (*guose*) to form the set-phrase, "heavenly perfume and national beauty" (*tianxiang guose*), because of which, whenever the peony is referred to, it transmits a notional association with the idea of "beautiful woman" and all the strong romantic implications that the pairing abundantly evokes.

Peach blossom and plum blossom (*tao* and *li*)[33] are also loaded terms, with highly erotic overtones indicative and descriptive of feminine beauty.[34] They combine in such a set-phrase as "as gorgeous as peach and plum blossom and as cold[35] as ice and frost (*yan ru taoli, leng ruo bingshuang*)", which is used to praise feminine beauty and women's chaste moral purity. Peach blossom is used elsewhere in a broad range of amorous terms and significances, fortune in love, for instance, being referred to as "peach blossom fortune (*taohua yun*)", and "the meagre fate of peach blossom (*taohua boming*)" applies

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[32] The following remarks on symbolism are worth our attention: "Whenever poetic symbolism is discussed, the distinction is likely to be made between 'the private symbolism' and of the modern poet and the widely intelligible symbolism of past poets." And the analysis of image is a similar case: "There is the distinction . . . between 'tied' and 'free' imagery: the former, auditory and muscular imagery necessarily aroused even though one reads to himself and approximately the same for all adequate readers; the latter, visual and else, varying much from person to person or type to type." René Wellek & Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949), pp. 194 &191.

[33]. "Plum" can be translated into Chinese as *li* or *mei*. Like the English word "plum", *mei* refers to the tree which bears fruit, and also to the fruitless tree which blooms in winter and is colloquially called "wintersweet (*meihua*)". The Chinese character *mei* bears a flavour of erotic association, as does *li*. For instance, *meidu* (literally "plum poison"), is a formal medical terms for syphilis.

[34] This point can be seen, for instance, in such a phrase as "*tao-lai li-da*" (meaning "to answer the coming peach with plum"), which is a metaphor for frequent exchange of gifts between lovers; and "*tou-tao bao-li*", literally, "sending a peach and being rewarded with a plum", of the same meaning, (from *Shijing*, "Daya, Yi").

[35] The Chinese word for "cold" is *leng* which also means "to be indifferent".

to women who have ill fortune.[36] Another set phrase is "woman's face and peach blossom" (*renmian taohua*).[37] After a long period of usage, such originally poetic and vivid terms have become so generally accepted by the language that, even though some thought may remind one of their full known source, one's mind does not normally recall their etymological origins in a conscious fashion. Even modern Chinese continues to generate similar phrases, a sensational illicit love-affair, for instance, being nowadays often referred to as "a peach-blossom hued event (*taose-shijian*)". Lotus blossom applies to beautiful women in the same way, the term "twin-flowered lotus (*bingdi lian*)" being a rhetorical cliché symbolising "perfect pair of lovers". Lotus tends more often to be

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[36] From Ruan Dacheng (Ming dynasty, d. 1646), *Yanzi-jian · Xiexiang*; cf. Wang Tao & others, *Zhonguo chengyu dacidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 1986), p. 1235.

[37] *Benshi-ji,* "Qinggan" (by Meng Qi, Tang dynasty) has it that Cui Hu wandered in Changan and saw a house surrounded by peach blossom. He knocked at the door and a girl let him in, and they fell in love at first sight. The next year Cui came again, only to find the door locked, then wrote a poem on the door which goes:

> Beneath this gate today last year
> Radiating each other with pink
> were **the peach blossom and her face,**
> Where has her face gone, now?
> One only sees the peach blossom remaining the same,
> smiling in the vernal breeze.

In *Yuhe-ji,* "Yanzu" by Mei Ding (Ming dynasty):

> The floral seasons
> Coming and going in sequence,
> I fear that
> the flying gossamer is catching the spring everywhere.
> Sleeping in the tent of lotus, sorrowful and alone,
> Can I see **her face like peach blossom** once again?

Liu Shizhong (fl.ca. 1302 AD) wrote in his poem *You Fenghua-Tai xia*:

> The eyebrows of the palace lady like willow leaves,
> **The face of the pretty girl like peach blossom,**
> Are why I could never settle in peace..

In *Cuihu-ji,* "Qiuyin", by Hu Wen (Ming dynasty) it says:

> Nothing is as charming and delicate as her face like peach blossom.

And Huan Zunxian (the Qing) in his *Burenchi wanyou* says:

> Crows turning back on the setting sun,
> Shimmering with red,
> **Her face like peach blossom**
> And veiled with gauze thin so thin.

Cf. Wang Tao, op. cit., p. 1017.

specifically associated with the fair sex, lotus root, for example being a symbol for a woman who preserves her chastity in a morally murky environment; that is to say metaphorically "emerges unstained from the sullying mud (*chu wuni er bu ran*)". The phrase "the lotus-root is broken, but the filaments are still connected (*ou duan si lian*)", refers to lovers whose relationship has been broken off but who still remain in love with the same love-partner.

We have seen above how in this play the particular qualities or colourfulness of a flower are not generally important, what is crucial being the concepts of a flower in general and general attitudes towards it. That is to say that, once a flower is referred to amorousness comes into play.[38] The word "flower" is found so very often in the text, for instance in the following numerous examples:

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
I scrutinise her in the light of the moon and lanterns:
Even ***the flowers*** *in the courtyard are not so charming as her.*[39]

CHORUS.
"Jasper ***Flower****",*
"The Jade Tree", and
"The Moonlit Spring River",
Are all sung in unison. [40]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
The golden pins and jade box
Are studded with emerald ***florets,***
I hold them firmly to my chest, . . . [41]

LADY YANG.
May we ask how many crabapple trees --
YONGXIN and NIANNU.
-- ***blossomed*** *over night?* [42]

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[38] This also reveals the debt to cultural pre-conditioning, *hua* being a general term for flowers of all kinds and charged with highly romantic nuances. "Sprigs of blossom beckoning forth (*huazhi zhaozhan)*" or "sprigs of blossom beckoning and waving (*huazhi zhaoyang)*" describe gorgeously dressed women, "under the spell of flower and sick with wine *(huamo jiubing)*" means inafatuated with indulgence in sex and alcohol, and "the heaven of flowers and earth of wine (*huatian jiudi*)" has a similar sense. The connotations of love are so habitually ingrained in the use of these phrases that they are often employed without real consciousness of their figurative or rhetorical timbre.

[39] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 2, p. 5.

[40] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.

[41] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.

[42] Ibid., Act 4, p. 13.

YONGXIN. . . .
*Add this **cherry blossom** to your hair.* [43]

LADY YANG. Last night I bore so much of your favour, the rain and dews were heavy and thick, so I couldn't help feeling that **the flower and it's twig** were exhausted[44].

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Today I am to enjoy rare **flowers** with my darling.[45]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Leaning on the fences,
*The **exuberant flowers open** with dews;* [46]

GAO. I report: The **peonies** at the Eaglewood Pavilion are fully **blooming**, . . .[47]

AN LUSHAN. . . .
The spring hue seduces human beings,
*The strollers are greeted by the birds **behind the flowers**.*[48]

TOGETHER.
*The **flower-fancying** wind blows as a fan,*
Rows upon rows of willows look misty and smoky.
Wherever we pass,
*It's hard to tell the **purple path** from the **red dusts**.*[49]

TOGETHER.
*The vermilion wheels crush and break **the floral banks**,*
The ear rings and hair pins are dropped
*Against **a background of falling petals**.*[50]

AN LUSHAN. . . .
***Crowds of flowers** belong to a single man only,*

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[43] Ibid., Act 4, p. 13.
[44] "The rain and dews (*yulu*)" refers to the emperor's side of the intercourse, and "the flower and twig" (*huazhi*) to Lady Yang herself. It is a linguistic habit to compare the masculine sexual action to "rain and dews", and a delicate woman to a "flower". Act 4, p. 15.
[45] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 15.
[46] Ibid., Act 4, p. 15.
[47] Ibid., Act 4, P. 15.
[48] Ibid., Act 5, p. 18.
[49]. "Purple path" and "red dusts" both refer to fallen flowers. Act 5, p. 18.
[50] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 5, p. 19.

So the highness of imperiality is shown
And the nobility of royalty is known [51]

ALL WOMEN.
It's more exquisite that the skirts are stuck with fragrant grass,
And the hair covered with ***wild flowers.***[52]

FLOWER MAID.
Towards the vermilion gate and embroidered tower,
I'm calling out eagerly selling ***flowers.***[53]

TOGETHER. . . .
Bees and butterflies join us idly,
Welcomed by willows and ***introduced by flowers.***[54]

TOGETHER.
Aroma comes up pushing our clothes,
The flowers *faintly scent the air,*
Mixed with warbling of the orioles,
Words and laughter are clearly heard.
The poplar floss falls like ***snowy flowers,***
Covering the white clover ferns;
The blue birds in pairs
Pick off ***the red petals*** *fallen.*[55]

GAO.
I issue the edict reigning in the horses of ***peach blossom,***
They ride on the golden saddles wearing skirts of butterfly.[56]

MAID.
The ***peach blossom*** *red and the willow emerald,*
The necromantic altar is filled with spring scenery,[57]

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[51] Ibid., Act 5, p. 19.
[52] Ibid., Act 5, p. 20.
[53] Ibid., Act 5, p. 20.
[54] Ibid., Act 5, p. 20.
[55] This line derives from a poem by Du Fu (712-770), one of the best classical Chinese poets, sharing prime fame with Li Bai (Li Po, 701-762). The original for "the red petals" in this play is in his poem "the red kerchiefs". Before Du's poem, Wang Bo (647-675) had written *A Verse of the Falling Petals* (*Luohua-shi*), in which is the source line: "Gauze sleeves and red kerchiefs are coming and going across each other." Act 5, p. 21.
[56] "The horse of peach blossom" refers to the carriages of the three beauties, as "peach" (*tao*) linguistically possesses strong feminine nuances and suggests romantic love. Act 5, p. 21.
[57] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 5, P. 21.

DUCHESS OF HAN and DUCHESS OF GUO.
It is even worse than
*The cold **plum blossom** with faint scent opening in the forbidden palace.*[58]

LADY YANG.
My poor hair!
*You have accompanied my **floral youth**, . . .*[59]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
On the carriage road grow the spring grasses,
*In the royal garden **blossoms** cover the twigs.*[60]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Hark,
*The fresh **flowers** seem rivalling for grandeur and beauty.*[61]

Eunuch.
*In the red mansion beside the **flowers**,*
The wind and strings are played.[62]

GAO.
The spring breeze could move the heavens back,
*The illustrious **flower** would return.*[63]

MAIDS.
In pairs, in pairs,
*The silk lanterns shine on the gorgeous **flowers**.*[64]

121 entries of *flower* are cited in the Appendix.

The point that such usage of flowers in *Palace of Eternal Life* is by no means entirely due to the author's personal choice and creative inspiration, but has deep roots in Chinese society's cultural, linguistic and customary legacies and conventions, is eloquently argued by the very frequency of repetition of the word "flower" and the remarkably limited range of set-expressions made up around the word "flower". Jung's

[58] Ibid., Act 7, p. 27.
[59] Ibid., Act 8, p. 31.
[60] Ibid., Act 9, p. 33.
[61] Ibid., Act 9, p. 34.
[62] Ibid., Act 9, p. 34.
[63] Ibid., Act 9, p. 35.
[64] Ibid., Act 9, p. 36.

comment on his "archetype", though referring to a different object, still throws light on this issue:

> The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure -- be it a daemon, a human being, or a process -- that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. . . . When we examine these images more closely, we find that they give form to countless typical experiences of our ancestors. They are, so to speak, the psychic residua of innumerable experiences of the same type.[65]

In his case, the reference is to supernatural figures, but in ours to a linguistic prototype. This is illustrated by the above indications of the omnipresent utilisation of "flower", which affords an insight into the deeper strata of Hong Sheng's artistic creativity: the cultural residuum in his unconscious which have blurred the boundaries between individuality and collectivity. This point warrants further discussion and corroboration for it is drawn from cross-references in other patterns, such as the following.

(2). Flower and Willow (*hua-liu*).

"Flower" is often paired with "willow" in this play. Willow is the most frequently referred to of trees, for similar reasons to those that have ensured "flower" its position of eminence. As a symbol of amorous activities and qualities it has been used copiously in Chinese literature, for its intrinsic and customary links with love and erotic notions. This being so, it is clear that the frequent employment of "willow tree" in *Palace of Eternal Life*, is likewise to a large extent not due to the chance inclinations or individual partialities of the playwright, but is considerably dependent on literary tradition and linguistic convention. The willow has a strong natural affinity with femininity, its twigs or switches having the lissom pliability seen as an ideal physical characteristic of women, and it often refers to women in love or concerned with love, for instance, "to pick off willow twig (*zheliu*)" means "to have affairs with a singing-girl". The erotic meaning of willow has in many ways lost its metaphorical vividness and freshness because of the overuse of it, but in its diminished impact can be more easily used to create a background atmosphere of romance. In *Palace of Eternal Life*, the willow tree occupies as important a place as the mango tree or twining creepers in *Shakuntala*, with the difference that the willow tree is much more broadly conceptual, much less particularly denoting, comes to the text mainly through the customs of linguistic heritage, and instead of being a "personification" or "naturisation" as an active rhetorical device, is rarely animated with spirit or endowed with personality, and has nothing at all to do with supernatural

[65] "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry", in Bernard F. Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), p. 845.

animism. Custom has made "willow" the frequent partner of "flower" in set expressions concerning romance, in which both convey conceptual impressions rather than pictorial perceptual images. These expressions may be extraneous to the dramatic action, and are part of a linguistic conglomeration that includes a multiplicity of variants. Both "flower" and "willow" may refer to women who are concerned with love or sex professionally or by illicit proclivities and activities. "Looking for flowers and asking about willows (*xunhua wenliu*)", for instance, means, for a man "to seek sexual pleasure with harlots", "flower street and willow lane (*huajie liuxiang*)" [66] and "flower gate and willow door (*huamen liuhu*)" are synonyms for "the world or quarters of harlotry", "sleeping among the flowers and lying among the willows (*mianhua woliu*)" means "to indulge in bought sex", "flower heart and willow eyes (*huaxin liuyan*) describes women's features, "willow nymph and flower goddess (*liusheng huashen*)" refers to the licentious courtesans, "willow shadow and flower shade (*liuying huayin*)" is a metophorical metonymy for the romantic tryst, "willow weeps and flower resents (*liuti huayuan*)" is used for the sadness of farewell between lovers, "obscured by willows and hidden by flowers (*liuyin huazhe*)" is of the clandestine romantic union, "willows charming and flowers bright (*liumei huaming*)" can be a metaphor for the prime of love,[67] and "floral and willowy illness (*hualiu-bing*)" is a formal term for "venereal disease"[68]. Authors often seek their original effects by their creative variations upon these stereotyped phrases, sometimes so subtly that sensitive discernment is required to perceive the basic allusion to willow or flower:

> AN LUSHAN.
> ***Willow floss*** *like gossamers on the road bewilder the well-wined,*
> *Among* ***flowers*** *the birds warble to beckon the passersby.*[69]

This antithetical couplet is delivered by An Lushan, the tartar general, who covets the imperial beauties. It is immediately followed by a couplet:

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[66] Variations are *huajie liumo*, *liumo huajie*, *liumo huaqu*, etc..

[67] It is often thought to be a description of a natural scene, but its romantic overtone can be confirmed by lines from *Shenxin-hui by* Zhu Yudun (1379-1439)*:*

> Committing this life to the pleasure realm,
> Leaning on jade and snuggling up to fragrance;
> Willows charming and flowers bright,
> Beautiful view and happy hour,
> Every one takes pleasure in shared feelings.

See Wang Tao & others, *Zhonguo chengyu dacidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 1986), p. 763.

[68] This illness is also referred to as "plum-virous (*meidu*)" in the Chinese medical terminlogy.

[69] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 18.

*The breeze loving the **flowers** blows as a fan,*
*Row upon row of **willows** look misty and smoky.*[70]

These lines provide a romantic backdrop for the entry of the imperial beauties, and the natural scenery is painted with romantic tints by means of such perceptual images as willow, catkin-petals, flower and so on,[71] foreshadowing the romantic vicissitudes of the later acts. Shortly afterwards, three Duchesses sing:

DUCHESSES.
*Mingled with our perfume is the **flower's fragrance**,*
Interspersed with the oriole's warbling laughter is heard faint,
***Willow floss** drifts like snow over the duckweed:*
The blue birds in couples carry off the red petals.
This is the high time of the spring! [72]

Here the willow floss, the flower's fragrance and the red petals are all variations of the same linguistic prototypes, and their connotations can be corroborated with cross-references to the other imagistic types included here such as "blue birds in couples", "the height of spring", and the "perfume" of the beauties. Even clearer is the parallel below:

ALL.
The bees and butterflies join us idly,
Welcomed by the willow and introduced by the flower. [73]

The overtone created by willow and flower is echoed by another linguistic pattern used in the play, that of "butterfly and bee (*feng-die*)". This pattern also has variants such as "provoking bees and enticing butterflies (*zhaofeng redie*)", "bees' aggression and butterflies' violence (*fengkuang dienue*)",[74] "butterflies pink and bees yellow (*diefen fenghuang*)"[75]. These appear to be basically scenic in the realistic sense unless the primordial literary type and residues of collective linguistic power are identified. Jung says in another context:

> The work presents us with a finished picture, and this picture is amenable to analysis only to the extent that we can recognize it as symbol. But if we are unable to

[70] Ibid., Act 5, p. 18.
[71] In Chinese there is no article or demonstrative pronoun in front of *hua* and *liu*, so "willow" and "flower" can be understood as either abstract ideas or real objects or both, so that the particular perceptual image and abstract concept are mingled with linguistic media.
[72] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 5, p. 21.
[73] Ibid., Act 5, p. 26.
[74] The logical subject for the phrase *zhaofen redie* is "flower", and also the logical object for *fengkuang dienü* is "flower", this demonstrating what is meant by cross-reference.
[75] Refers to women's make-up.

discover any symbolic value in it, we have merely established that, so far as we are concerned, it means no more than what it says, or to put it another way, that it is no more that what it seems to be.[76]

Occasionally this pattern is echoed by others, that of "oriole and swallow (*ying-yan*)", for instance,

> EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Suddenly she becomes limp, like --
> *A drooping willow or supple flower,*
> *A delicate oriole or languid swallow.* [77]

The pair of "oriole and swallow" has similar aesthetic and linguistic values to others, previous and subsequent, "swallows in pairs and orioles in couples (*yanlü yingchou*)" is a metaphor for lovers, "swallow is jealous and oriole ashamed (*yandu yingcan*)" hyperbolises the beauty of women, "the speech of swallow and voice of oriole (*yanyu yingsheng*)" describes the pleasant voice of females. The famous beauty Zhao Feiyan, the empress for Han Chengdi, shares the character *yan* for swallow for her name, and Cui Yingying, the heroine in one of the best romantic literary works uses the character *ying* for oriole.

Even more than in the case of willow and flower, one is from this later pattern able to observe the established historical influences upon the play's language. It has general reference to men's seeking after women for sexual pleasure. This pattern may similarly be taken as a real perceptual image which goes towards forming the general dramatic environment, one of vernal rustic scenery, but serves basically not to provide a realistic description of Nature, but to establish an amorous atmosphere. Thus its conceptual use is far more vital than its use as a perceptual image. It would be a great mistake to take it merely in its literal sense. Indeed one should always beware of interpreting the face values of these terms as the intended ones.[78] On the other hand, it would also be wrong

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[76] "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry", in Dukore, op.cit., (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), p. 844.

[77] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 24, p. 108.

[78] It is difficult to say whether these passages are realistic scenic descriptions or figurative. Jonathan Culler studies similar literary phenomena: "There seem to be two ways of thinking about the relation between the literal and the metaphorical , which we might christen the *via philosophica* and *via rhetorica*. . . . The first locates metaphor in the gap between sense and reference, in the progress . . . of seeing something as something. Metaphor thus becomes an instance of general cognitive processes at their most creative or speculative. . . . However, precisely because this approach assimilates metaphor to general cognitive process, it makes it difficult to establish any firm distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. Since to use language at all is to treat something as a member of a class, to see it as an instance of some category, language itself seems to be metaphorical." See his "The Turns of Metaphor", in his *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, literature, deconstruction* (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 202. I am inclined to think these examples mainly figurative upon the foundation of the scenic. The difficulty facing analysis here shows the perfect harmony between the sense and referent.

to regard these literary phenomena as the usual active rhetorical devices. In some sense, they may be classified into the Chinese category of *xing*[79], which does not quite coincide with any of the Western categories such as simile, metaphor, metonymy, symbol, personification, synecdoche, allegory or objective correlative. Western theorists "do not have any critical term like the *xing* referred to by Chinese."[80] One of the reasons for this lack of coincidence, is that the Western terms deal with the relationship between idea and perceptual image, but willow, flower and so on are not quite perceptual images, more often quite clearly lacking all physical or visual substance, for example:

MAID.
*The **peach blossom** red and the **willow** emerald,* [81]

EMPEROR.
*Like a **willow** twig supple in the breeze,*
*Resembling the lotus **blossom** in the limpid wave.* [82]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*Even the lotus **blossom** loses out to the beauty's attire,*
LADY YANG.
*The wind frequents the **willows** while the water palace grows cool.* [83]

CHORUS.
*A **flower** is flaunting,*
*A **willow** twig is winnowed;* [84]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*Like a **willow** which contains the spring wind,*
*Like a **flower** which fears the dews,* [85]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*The **willow** trees gain the yellow,*
The duck weeds lose the green,
*The pink **petals** of the lotus blossom are falling off.* [86]

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[79] *Xing* may regarded as a common rhetorical figure throughout the Chinese poetic history, it is not confined within *Shjjing* (*The Odes*) only.
[80] Ye Jiaying, *Zhuoguo cixue de xiandai guan* (Hunan: Yuelu Shushe, 2nd ed., 1992), p. 90.
[81] Ibid., Act 5, p. 21.
[82] Ibid., Act 12, p. 52.
[83] Ibid., Act 12, p. 53.
[84] Ibid., Act 16, p. 73.
[85] Ibid., Act 21, p. 97.
[86] Ibid., Act 24, p. 106.

LADY YANG.
*The illusory **flowers** dazzle my eyes.*
*My **willow**-like waist can't support me,*[87]

LI GUINIAN.
***Flowers** lose to her cheeks and **willow** twigs to her waist.* [88]

LI GUINIAN.
*Half of the **willows** and **flowers** have faded.* [89]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*The leaves of **the red lotus** have flagged,*
*The twigs of **the green willows** become sparse.* [90]

The flowers and willows solely serve to reinforce the aura of love, a function to be observed yet more clearly in another conventional pairing the terms below.

Celestial objects such as the sun, stars, the Milky Way (termed as the Silver River, *yinhe*) and so on, are all utilised by the play, as are the elements and forces of Nature such as wind, breeze, rain, cloud, river, mountain, and others. Of the former category, the moon is most often used, and of the latter the most frequently employed the pair of "rain and cloud (*yunyu*)". Like the previous instances, both "moon" and the "rain and cloud" are used according to special linguistic conventions.

(3). Cloud and Rain (*yun-yu*).

"Cloud and Rain" is a synonym or euphemism, depending on one's attitude, for "sexual intercourse", and through the long course of history its rhetorical meaning has taken on such prominence that its etymological origin has receded in the general reader's or audience's mind. It alludes to the legendary account attributed to Song Yu (c. 290 BC-c. 223 BC) of love-making at Sun Terrace between King Xiang and the goddess who assumed the form of clouds in the morning and that of rain in the evening, hence the metonymy "cloud and rain" for sexual intercourse and such phrases as: "carrying clouds and grasping rain (*xieyun woyu*)", "mingled with clouds and intimate with rain (*tiyun*

[87] *Liuyao nan fu-qi*; ibid., Act 24, p. 108.
[88] Ibid., Act 38, p. 170.
[89] Ibid., Act 38, p. 172.
[90] Ibid., Act 49, p. 214.

youyu)", "driving clouds and making rain (*xingyun zuoyu)*", "rain disperses and cloud withdraws (*yuduan yunshou)*"[91]. In *Palace of Eternal Life*, many scenes, perceptual images and expressions, descriptive or conceptual, employ this phrase or its associations, for example the following:

YONGXIN.
Affairs behind the court curtains often easily go wrong,
Clouds rolling up,
Rain pouring down,
On Sun Terrace,
Troubles suddenly occur. [92]

DUCHESS OF GUO.
Who would know about ***their unbridled cloud and rain****?* [93]

EMPEROR.
Outside the pearled door-curtains,
The rain *is being rolled up and* ***the clouds*** *are flying speedily.* [94]

In these two examples, we can still understand the surface literal meaning without tracing back to the etymological origin. For instance, the latter example above could, conceivably, on the surface be considered as simply a description of domestic decor and meteorological phenomena. In many such cases, however, it would make no minimal linguistic sense unless the deeper semantic undertones were taken into consideration, for example:

LADY YANG.
When I waited on him over the spring outing
Dawn and dusk,
Who could have foretold ***the rain*** *thread would snap*
And ***the cloud*** *be broken?*[95]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Where ***the dusk rain*** *pattered a fortnight ago.*[96]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

[91] Means love is ended or lovers are separated.
[92] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 6, p. 23.
[93] Ibid., Act 7, p. 26.
[94] Ibid., Act 21, p. 95.
[95] Ibid., Act 8, p. 30.
[96] Ibid., Act 2, p. 3.

When the wind is fresh and the moon bright,
We will laugh at ***their rainy dream*** *on the Solar Terrace.*[97]

LADY YANG.
After I enjoyed the coolness,
The rain washed *and* ***clouds flooded.***
Where I slept soundly,
The pink turned watery and the yellow oozed. [98]

LADY YANG.Last night I attended him in bed, **the cloud** is indeed delicate and **the rain** shy.

LADY YANG.
Then,
The dreamy rain *flooded over our bed.* [99]

Only if the allusive meaning is taken into account can these lines be interpreted in any meaningful way. The same is true of the examples below:

DUCHESS OF GUO.
The attractive flower has sagged before the wind,
My prime has passed away as in a dream.
Who could still recognise me who was so romantically fair in the past!
Like broken jade,
Like faded blossom,
I am lying in the deserted wilderness;
The clouds have been tossed away,
The rain been broken off,
I have sunk to down by the fountain of the Netherworld. [100]

LADY YANG.
The moon has fallen, the flower drooped,
The cloud has withdrawn, the rain has been severed. [101]

CHORUS. . . .
We have so moved the Goddess of Witch Mount,
That ***she dreams of the drifting clouds.*** [102]

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[97] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.
[98] Ibid., Act 11, p. 46; both the pink and the yellow refer to her cosmetics.
[99] *Meng-yu-lian-chuang*, Act 18, p. 81.
[100] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 27, p. 122.
[101] Ibid., Act 47, p. 209.
[102] Ibid., Act 50, p. 223.

WEAVING DAMSEL.
On the Tridivia,
We look at the blue seas and Red Dust
And see them changing from brink to brink.
As an eternal couple and perpetual pair,
You are always free of any care.
Brushing the moon aside,
Leaving the wind behind,
You roam about and pass by,
Never ***lingering in infatuated cloud and heavy rain.*** [103]

When "cloud" and "rain" are juxtaposed as in some of the above-quoted examples, the allusive meaning and conventional force are comparatively clear, but when either cloud or rain is used separately, such allusive meanings are obscured and may easily be overlooked. Therefore, when either of them appears, it is important to search for the other, and to identify the correspondence between them, or assume the other as a referent.[104]

A novel speciality of *Palace of Eternal Life* is that "rain" occupies such a large space in it, some acts being set in the rain and mainly playing on the theme of rain, such as Act Twenty-nine, "Hearing the Bell", Act Thirty-seven "The Private Sacrifice" and Act Forty-five, "Dreaming in the Rain". Act Twenty-nine alludes to the historical account of Emperor Minghuang's composing a song entitled *The Rain Beating the Bell* (*Yu lin-ling*), also interrelated with an event of his real life that on a visit to Huaqing Palace he bade the musician Zhang play the tune for him. This act of the play is clearly inspired by the literary power of a poetic composition by the emperor as a real historical figure. Secondly, we see the influence of the literary tradition. Act Thirty-seven inherits from a similar scene in *Rain on the Paulownia Tree* by Bai Pu in which the emperor is awakened from his dream of Lady Yang by the rain beating on the leaves of the paulownia tree, and, annoyed by it, has the tree felled. Act Thirty-seven is set on the Day of Pure and Bright (Qingming), a customary festival for mourning, which is often a rainy day. Apart from this and other similarly particular reasons, the linguistic convention of

[103] Ibid., Act 50, p. 222.

[104] Four phases may outline the development of the phrase "cloud and rain": it was originally scenic and descriptive, secondly it was used as a metonymy, then metonymy was used metaphorically, and at last it lost the rhetorical meaning and acted as a direct reference to sexual intercourse. This example ignores the temporal distinctions and switches between metaphor and metonymy which are here interactive. As Gérard Genette says: "The metonymical sliding is not just 'disguised' but actually transformed into metaphorical predication. Thus, far from being antagonistic and incompatible, metaphor and metonymy support each other and interpenetrate one another; and to do justice to the latter does not consist of drawing up a list of metonymies over and against the list of metaphors but rather of showing the presence and acting of relations of 'coexistence' at the very heart of the relation of analogy: the role of metonymy *in metaphor*." As quoted in Jonathan Culler, op.cit., p. 193.

pairing "cloud" and "rain" further accounts for the extensive use of rainy scenes in the play. The rainy scenes also have their corresponding "cloud" ones, and "cloud" as an isolated usage is also frequently referred to, especially in the heavenly and immortal scenes. The two terms, in short, form a cross-reference to each other.

"Rain" in this play is furthermore almost developed into a full independent conceptual, and aesthetic one concerning the emotions. From this angle, the rainy scenes and perceptual images may be regarded as the embodiment of this concept, as in the case of beauty and sublimity. When it is embodied as perceptual images and scenes, it possesses immense artistic force and rich implications, especially in the directions of emotion and love. This is why some acts consist basically of only rainy scenes, such acts being highly lyrical and contributing very little to the movement of the plot or dramatic action. Most typically in Act Twenty-nine, the significance of "rain" can hardly be identified unless the connection with "cloud" is taken into consideration. The example below shows "rain" in this aesthetic use:

EMPEROR.
Ascending alone,
I feel sad again,
The mountain and waters are as vast as my love.
Where is the wind blowing the rain?
Drop by drop,
Drip-drop, drip-drop,
It strains my nerves to breaking point.
(A bell jingles offstage.)
Hark, it sounds continuously. How annoying it is! Gao, take a look and see what is going on!
GAO. It is the sound of the rain beating the woods, echoed by the bell in front of the eaves ringing with the wind.
EMPEROR. Oh, how pathetic to hear such a bell sounding!
Dripping, dripping,
Jingling, jingling,
With the vast sadness,
I am startled abruptly.
In the distance over the mountains and woods,
Shivering in harmony with the wind and rain,
Sounding are the sharp pitches and low sobbing.
A bit, a drop, a ding-dong,
A bit, a drop, a ding-dong,
Mingled with tears and blood of the miserable man,
It bursts forth in all directions. [105]

(4). **Flower and Moon (*hua-yue*).**

[105] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 29, p. 132.

Of the heavenly bodies, the most frequently referred to is the moon. In the first place, it serves very often in general as an actual background against which love incidents take place, and creates romantic tints and arouses romantic imaginations. This function, however, is too obvious to mention, since the associations between the moon and love are such commonplace and therefore milder ones of mythology, folklore and everyday life. It is through a different channel, the linguistic one of vocabulary, that "moon" comes into this play, so many glimpses of moon and moon contexts derive from archetypal units of diction. There are certain common set-phrases consisting of "moon" and "flower" which are intimately bound up with the notion of love, such as, "before blossoms and under the moon (*huaqian yuexia*)", which refers to a lovers' tryst, "floral features and moon face (*huarong yuemao* or *huayan yuemao* or *yuemao huapang*)", which signifies beautiful women, and "flower in the breeze and snowy moon (*fenghua xueyue*)", which refers to romantic affairs. And also, "flowery dawn and moony night (*huazho yuexi* [106])", "the moon full and flowers fragrant (*yueman huaxiang*)"[107], "the moon incomplete and wind broken (*yueque fengcan*)"[108], "the moon closes and flowers are ashamed (*yuebi huaxiu*)" or "cause flower to be closed and the moon ashamed (*bihua xiuyue*)"[109]. In these, an affinity between "flower" and "moon" is rooted in the general shared linguistic consciousness, and they are used in the usual manner in this play.

We have noted the partnership between "moon" and "flower" in some of the examples above. In their joint linguistic pattern, neither the moon nor the flower is necessarily intended as anything substantial. They are, in the first instance, not literal objects but primarily conceptual ones, abstract keys opening up to rich modes of amorousness, as in the following examples:

EMPEROR.
Stepping down the golden palace hall,
I scrutinise her in the light of ***the moon*** *and lanterns;*
Even ***the flowers*** *in the courtyard are not so charming as her.* [110]

EMPEROR.
Flowers *flutter,*
Candles flicker,
The moon shines *over the casement.* [111]

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[106] Variations are *huazhao yueye*, *yueye huazhao*, *yuexi huazhao* and *yeyue huazhao*.
[107] The high point of love.
[108] Refers to the death of beautiful women.
[109] To describe feminine beauty.
[110] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 2, p. 5.
[111] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.

LI MU. . . .
The crescent *shines on half of the wall,*
Flowers *are swaying their shadows.* [112]

In these example resides, half-hidden, the reciprocal correspondence between the moon and the flower. This is not coincidence, not an incidental or improvisational technique. As in the case of "flower and willow", the partnership has grown solidity through the ages, nurtured by cultural and linguistic habits and demands. Let us look at some more instances:

YONGXIN.
Embracing in the dawn with the ***flowers,***
Hugging in the night with the ***moon,***
They have tasted all the tastes of love. [113]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. . . .
My soul has flown,
My spirit has lost its centrality!
And
The bright ***moon*** *and radiant* ***flowers*** *have,*
Long since,
Been frightened to pieces. [114]

PIGLING. . . .
In the shadow cast by ***the moon,***
Flowers *are swaying.* [115]

In the above-quoted, examples, once again it would be absurd to take the moon-flower images at face value, and they can only be properly understood by a knowledge of their culturally embedded significance.

(5). Fragrance and Jade (*xiang-yu*).

Another pattern of partly subliminal significance is that of the pair "fragrance" and "jade" (*xiang* and *yu*). This pair is even more abstract than the previously mentioned ones.

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[112] Ibid., Act 14, p. 63.
[113] *Hua yao ying*; ibid., Act 21, p. 95.
[114] Ibid., Act 24, p. 108.
[115] Ibid., Act 34, p. 151.

The character pronounced *xiang,* means not only such like smells as "fragrance", "aroma" and "scent", but also "incense", and furthermore it indicates "flower". *Fang* is a synonym for *xiang*, except in the latter's sense of "incense", and is an adjective often applied to fair femininity, as in *fangxin*, "fragrant heart", *fangzu*, "fragrant feet", *fangzong*, "the trace of fragrant footsteps", *qiqifangcao*, "lush fragrant grasses" (a term or euphemism for the female's pubic hairs), and other compound words. *Fang* is an auxiliary of *xiang*.

"Jade (*yu*)" itself is applied to descriptions of women in the same way, in compounds such as *yuti*, "jade body", meaning, generally, "a woman's beautiful body", *yuzhi* (jade fingers), *yugu* (jade bones), *yumao* (jade image)[116], *yumen* (jade gate) or *yuhu* (jade door)[117]. Sensuous descriptions of femininity are further conveyed through such phrases as "jade bones and icy flesh (*yugu bingji*)", "jade soft and flower tender (*yuruan huarou*)", "jade broken into pieces and pearls sunk (*yusui zhuchen*)", "jade broken into pieces and flowers gone (*yusui huaxiao*)", "jade image and flower face (*yumao huarong*)", and many others.[118]

Xiang and *Yu* often work in tandem with each other. The ancient phrase "stealing the incense and filching the jade (*tou-xiang qie-yu*)" is a large part of the reason why the pair gained its erotic associations. The phrase means "to have secret and illicit sexual intercourse". During the Jin dynasty (265-420) a young girl named Jia Wu had an illicit affair with a young man Han Shou, and stole some incense that the emperor had personally bestowed upon her father, Jia Chong, and gave it to Han as a present. When Jia Chong discovered the theft, he felt obliged to round off the matter without a public scandal by having the two young people marry each other.[119] Both "fragrance" and "jade", the latter meaning "white jade" and often being used to describe fair softness of complexion, have long been frequently used in descriptions of beautiful women, and the pair are rich in erotic associations. Another set phrase, "the fragrance vanishes and the jade perishes (*xiangxiao yurun*)", refers to the death of beautiful women of nobility and chastity. "Soft jade and warm incense (*ruanyu wenxiang*)" is often an image for

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[116] As in "jade image and flower face (*yumao huarong)*".

[117] Euphemisms for vagina.

[118] Such as *yu-cheng-qishi*, which means to accomplish a nuptial unity, and *yuli tingting*, being descriptive of the beautiful woman with a shapely figure standing.

Jade sometimes applies to the male as well, and in some such cases is related to love and sex, for instance, "jade stem" (*yudi)*", a euphemism for the male penis. Sometimes it is of neutral gender, for example, "beautiful jade without a flaw (*meiyu wuxia*)" refers to perfection, but still tends more to refer to femininity, as used, for instance, in *Xixiang-ji* by Wang Shifu, 13th-14th century AD, Section 3, Act 3, and that in *Jing-hua yuan* by Li Ruzhen (c.1763- c.1830), Chapter 90.

[119] See *Jin-shu,* "Jia Chong zhuan", and also "Touxiang", *Cihai* (new recompilation, 1965) (Hong Kong: Zhonghuashuju Xianggang-fenju, 1979), p. 440.

attractive women[120], and in the phrase "to feel tender towards fragrance (or incense) and cherish jade (*lianxiang xiyu*)", both *xiang* and *yu* again refer to charming women. This linguistic partnership is further witnessed by such phrases as: "fragrance tender and jade delicate (*xiangjio yurun*)", "fragrant flesh and jade body (*xiangji yuti*)", "fragrance moist and jade warm (*xiangrun yuwen*)", "fragrance vanishing and jade submerged (*xiangxiao yuchen*)", "jade shrinks and fragrance vanishes (*yujian xiangxiao*)", "jade smashed into pieces and fragrance broken (*yusui xiangcan*)", "jade broken into pieces and flower disappearing (*yusui xiangxiao*)", "jade broken into fragments and fragrance dispersed (*yusui xiangxiao*)".[121]

In *Palace of Long Life*, unlike the previous cases, "fragrance" and "jade" appear separately with much greater frequency, but all the same, there is still a strong correspondence between them in their use, which is identifiable through the process of critical appreciation. The following are examples of "fragrance" in the play:

> LADY YANG. . . .
> *The spring generates celestial language,*
> *The* ***fragrance*** *surrounds the imperial procession.* [122]

> TOGETHER. . . .
> *Double roads, winding veranda,*
> *Everywhere are flying the* ***fragrant*** *dusts.* [123]

> EMPEROR. . . . As for this box --
> *I will hide it deep in my brocade sleeve, and*
> *Wrap it with* ***fragrant*** *satin layer after layer.* [124]

> YONGXIN and NIANNU.
> *While the late-coming sun shines on the eaves and*
> *The pleasant breeze blows the curtain and screen,*
> *It is lovely to sit idly* ***being perfumed with fragrance.*** [125]

> LADY YANG. . . . Wiped off with the gauze sleeves, my tears shed onto the icy red, and cleaned by the bright silk ribbon, my sweat falls onto the **jade fragrance.**[126]

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[120] But according to some explanations, its original etymological meaning is not concerned with women.

[121] In some examples above *xiang* can also mean "flower".

[122] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.

[123] Ibid., Act 2, p. 4.

[124] Ibid., Act 2, p. 6.

[125] Ibid., Act 4, p. 13.

[126] *Hanliu xiangyu*; ibid., Act 4, p. 13.

EMPEROR. . . .
I open the ribbon bed-tent,
It smells faintly of borneol [127] *mingled with her* ***fragrance.*** [128]

ALL WOMEN. . . .
It is more stylish that
Our skirts are stuck about with ***fragrant grasses,***
And our hair is covered with wild flowers. [129]

YANG GUOZHONG.
. . . By where the ***fragrant carriages*** *pass . . .* [130]

NECROMANCER.
Before the vast mountains and waters,
Her scented soul [131] *is but faintly visible;*
In front of the dim stars and moon,
Her ***fragrant face*** [132] *is unseen.* [133]

These examples are selected from only three acts, which suggests the overall frequency of occurrence of this figure of speech.

The uses of *xiang* may usefully be categorised. Firstly, it can be simply a cliché or fixed expression, for instance, "fragrant carriage (*xiangche*)", "fragrant shoulder (*xiangjian*)", and "fragrant cheeks (*xiangsai*)". Secondly, it can be more descriptive, more improvisational and more creative, for example, "I am opening the ribbon bed-tent,/ It smells faintly of the borneol mingled with her fragrance". In this example, although the expression is vivid and creative, it is still far from being a realistic depiction, its symbolic meaning, rhetorical function and the force of linguistic convention being clearly felt. In another example, "It is lovely to sit idly,/ Being perfumed with fragrance", while obviously these two lines are understandable on the literal surface, "fragrance" here properly taken as semi-realistic and quasi-metaphysical. Following on from the above, the third category is far more distant from the plane of realism, as for instance in, "I bear abundance of love from the depth of the imperial fragrance". In this case, "fragrance" is

[127] A kind of perfume.
[128] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 13.
[129] Ibid., Act 4, p. 20.
[130] Ibid., Act 5, p. 19.
[131] *Xianghun*.
[132] *Fangrong*.
[133] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 46, p. 202.

no whit physically substantial, and its erotic nuance is transmitted from the accumulated Chinese cultural consciousness. Although "fragrance" suggests pleasant physical odour, far more important here is the abstract concept defined by common aesthetic heritage.

"Jade" sometimes appears together with "fragrance", for instance:

> *My sweat falls onto the **jade fragrance**.* [134]

> *Crowds of lasses are diffusing **jade fragrance**.* [135]

> *Like **broken jade**,*
> *Like the **vanished fragrance**,*
> *I am lying in the deserted wilderness.*[136]

"Jade" and "fragrance" also find a way to join each other through linguistic ambiguity, which eloquently speaks for how strong the attraction between them is. In the last act, for instance:

> *Xiang dangri,*
> ***Yu**-zhe **xiang**-cui, . . .* [137]

In this context, *xiang* means "flower" rather than "fragrance" or "incense". However, it affords a visual linkage between *xiang* and *yu* and thus echoes the pattern behind the surface diction.

More often than not, however, it stands alone. Even in such cases, a potential communication between it and "fragrance" still exists. "Jade" is used fairly widely in the text. In the last act of the play for example, it occurs no fewer than ten times:

> NECROMANCER.
> *I am about to return riding the wind,*
> *But I am afraid the **jade tower***
> *Is too high and too cold. . . .*[138]

> MOON MAIDEN.
> *Adding lustre to the autumnal view,*
> *The **jade wheel** is just round;* [139]

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[134] *Han liu xiangyu.* Act 4, p. 13.
[135] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 50, p. 223.
[136] Ibid., Act 27, p. 122.
[137] *Thinking of the past, when the **jade** is broken and **flower*** damaged; uttered by Emperor Minghuang, in *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 50, p. 220. *Xiang* may aslo be interpreted as "fragrance".
[138] Ibid., Act 50, p. 217.
[139] Ibid., Act 50, p. 218.

EMPEROR.

Looking back on those days:
*The **jade was smashed**,*
*The **flower was damaged**,*
All owing to my weakness and the declining of the times. [140]

LADY YANG.

***The jade was crushed under the pear blossom**,*
My broken soul followed the cuckoo. [141]

IMMORTALS. . . .

Splendid,
We assemble by rainbow-like towers at marble pond,
*A crowd of maidens are diffusing **jade fragrance.***[142]

IMMORTALS. . . .

The silver toad is shining,
***The jade clepsydra** lags slow,*
Lasting forever is the song-with-dance
-- "Rainbow Skirt and Feather Garment"! [143]

IMMORTALS. . . .

Affection proves to be vanity and void.
Cut off the lovesick filament!
Smash the gold cangue,
*Loosen the **jade chain**!* [144]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. I wanted to rebury your corpse when I passed by Ma Wei's Slope on the way back, only to find nothing of your **jade bones.** Only the sachet was left there. [145]

LADY YANG.

*The pear blossom faded like **pieces of jade**,*
My broken soul chased after the cuckoo.[146]

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[140] Ibid., Act 50, p. 220.
[141] Ibid., Act 50, p. 220.
[142] *Yufang*, Act 50, p. 223.
[143] Ibid., Act 50, p. 223.
[144] Ibid., Act 50, p. 220.
[145] Ibid., Act 50, p. 220
[146] Ibid., Act 50, p. 220.

Moreover, Lady Yang is herself at times addressed or referred to as *Yufei*, "the Jade Imperial Concubine"[147], and Act Twenty-five in which the heroine is immolated is entitled "Burying the Jade (*Mai-yu*)".

Besides *yu,* there are some characters of similar meaning, such as *yao* and *qiong*, both defined as "beautiful (white) jade", which often closely resemble *yu* in terms of erotic overtone and feminine associations.

(6). Wind and Moon (*feng-yue*).

There are other patterns, such as "wind-and-moon (*feng-yue*)", "orioles-and-swallows (*ying-yan*)" and "flowers-and-grass (*hua-cao*).

In Chinese, the compound word for "wind and moon", is a pleasant-sounding synonym for "romantic affair". In the first place, although the moon is universally associated with love, it is a particularly strong linguistical characteristic of the Chinese literary and romantic tradition. For example, "under the moon and in front of the stars (*yuexia xingqian*)" refers to the romantic tryst irrespective of the actual nature of its real setting, "moony brows and starry eyes (*yuemei huayan*)" is a phrase used to describe the features of beautiful women, "the red string under the moon (*yuexia chisheng*)" means marriage contract, and "the old man under the moon (*yuexia laoren*)" means matchmaker.[148] The romantic atmosphere is intensified when the moon and wind join each other in such phrases as the following: "affection of wind and longing for the moon (*fengqing yuesi*)",[149] "facing the breeze and under the moon (*fengqian yuexia*)",[150] "feeling of the wind and affection of the moon (*fengqing yueyi*)", "feelings of the wind and debt of the moon (*fengqing yuezhai*),[151] "wind and moon are always fresh (*fengyue changxin*)",[152] and a fair number of others.

This pair too has a recurrent influence on the language and mood of this play:

> EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
> *When the* ***wind*** *is fresh and the* ***moon*** *bright,*
> *We will laugh at their rainy dream on the Solar Terrace.*[153]

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[147] It also refers to her name Jade Bracelet, *Yuhuan*.

[148] *Xu "Youguai-lu"* by Li Fuyan (fl.ca. AD 831) has it that an old man under the moonlight matches couples by tying them together by their feet with red string. See "Yuexia laoren", in Wang Tao & others, op. cit, p. 1679.

[149] Lovesickness and romantic aspiration.

[150] Descriptive of the tryst.

[151] Particularly refers to predestined love.

[152] Means the love is fresh forever.

[153] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.

NECROMANCER. . . .
Dews shine while stars are dim,
The moon leaks and the wind is penetrating;[154]
Then,
Dimly, dimly,
Faintly, faintly,
Gradually, gradually,
In obscurity,
A beauty looms with grace,
Only now
Will the hidden grief in the human world be confirmed,
And the broken tie in the netherworld be proven.[155]

WEAVING DAMSEL. . . .
As an eternal pair,
You are always free from any care.
Brushing the moon aside,
Leaving the wind behind,
You roam about and pass by . . . [156]

In the above examples, "wind" and "moon" are separated, but all the same still retain a cohesive force between them, and indeed it is only by putting them together in our minds that we can explain the meaning of the lines and identify the romantic overtones. [157]

(7). Flower and Grass (*hua-cao*).

The "flower-and-grass" pattern is seen in the following:

ALL THE WOMEN. . . .
It is more stylish that
Our skirts are stuck with fragrant ***grasses***
And our hair covered with wild ***flowers.*** [158]

"Flower" and "grass" may seem to have been placed in parallel here by pure coincidence or creative choice of the moment, but the juxtaposition is in fact much due to conventional linguistic affinities. "Idle flowers and wild grasses (*xianhua yecao*)", refers to women with whom men have or would have illicit affairs; "to pick up flowers and

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[154] *Yuelou fengchuan.*
[155] Ibid., Act 46, p. 201.
[156] Ibid., Act 46, p. 222.
[157] In these cases, the diction does not make any sense unless the cohesion between wind and moon is taken into consideration, and as in the case of dealing with a metaphor, one should posit "a network of conventional associations to account for the production of a metaphor." See Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, op. cit., p. 209.
[158] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 5, p. 20.

provoke grasses (*nianhua recao*)", means to have love with singing-girls, and "flowers and grasses (*huahua caocao*)", refers to romantic vicissitudes.

(8). Gold and jade (*jinyu*).

This is another frequent pairing, for example:

> IMMORTALS. . . .
> *Eros proves to be vanity and void.*
> *Cut off the lovesick filament!*
> *Smash the* ***gold cangue,***
> *Loosen the* ***jade chain!*** [159]

The partnership between gold and jade is also formed by linguistic convention. Set-phrases such as "the perfect nuptial tie as between gold and jade (*jinyu liangyuan*)", "golden breeze and jade dew (*jinfeng yulu*)", meaning perfect pairs of lovers or perfectly loving married couples, and in "mourning for the gold and feeling sad about the jade (*daojin beiyu*)", in which both gold and jade refer metaphorically to dead women. More often than not, gold and jade are separated in the text, but the partnership between them still retains its latency, and when called upon by the context serves to reinforce the mood of amorousness.[160]

In short, what colours *Shakuntala* is an animism, the glamour of the supernatural, and the more innocent assumptions of the identicality between human beings and Nature, while in *Palace of Eternal Life*, the general body of linguistic convention leaves clear brands on its diction and lexicon.[161] Despite such a difference, their languages share a

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[159] Ibid., Act 50, p. 223.

[160] Such historical residues exert a considerable impacts on Chinese literature in general. For instance, two heroines with highly feminine characteristics in *Hong-lou meng* (*Red Chamber Dream*) are named respectively Daiyu and Baochai, meaning "black **jade**" and "**gold** hairpin". Literal translation of Baochai should be "Precious Hairpin", but what is emphasized is "gold" as the material, therefore the romantic overtone is achieved. For instance, the romantic relationship between Baochai and Baoyu is frequently referred to as *jinyu yinyuan*, "the nuptial tie of gold and jade" (cf. the set-phrase *jinyu liangyuan*, "the perfect nuptial tie of gold and jade", and *jintong yunü*, "gold boy and jade girl"). In this case **gold** refers to Baochai and **jade** to Baoyu, and parallels the romantic relationship between Daiyu and Baoyu which is referred to as *mushi yinyuan*, "the nuptial tie of **tree** and **stone**, tree referring to Daiyu who was originally a glossy ganoderma or a *fomes japonica* fungus sprite, *lingzhi*).

[161] The relationship, in the linguistic respects of the Chinese play, between the author's individuality and collective impact from convention resembles that between personal creativity and the archetypes in terms of image and theme, and in both cases, the poet, as Eliot claims, "must escape from his personality (adding that he must of course first have a personality) into the stream of tradition that is poetry without poets." See G. Douglas Atkin & Laura Morrow, "Archetypal Criticism", *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 52.

great deal of visual beauty, both avail themselves of many perceptual images, and in both cases their style and rhetorical quality are not entirely due to their author's personal choice and preferences but rely heavily on common cultural legacies and a strong collective consciousness. In this respect, it is important to point out that the playwrights were not necessarily always consciously aware of the collective forces, but would have been influenced subconsciously in many instances, their images welling from the fountainhead of culture, congealed out of the matrix of language. This being so, we are able to see in both plays an organic mixture of individual creativity and collective linguistic habit combined with great skill and naturalness. With regard to these cases, "we should remember the dictum of Gerhard Hauptmann: 'Poetry evokes out of words the resonance of the primordial word.'"[162]

[162] Gerhard Hauptmann, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry", in Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, op. cit., p. 844.

Part Four. Imperiality, Kingship and the Supernatural

In traditional and in some ways still surviving Chinese attitudes, imperiality has various associations with supernaturality, this being clearly reflected in such literary works as *Palace of Eternal Life*. The situation is similar with *Shakuntala*. This Sanskrit play presents life as a transitional phase passing from a mythological to a heroic era, so that, in it, supernaturality and kingship are intrinsically interfused. Moreover, such a phase or combination is not confined to literature, but exists in a far wider perspective, of which literature is only a reflection, and if we look wider indeed, we may readily perceive that it is fairly universal. For instance, in the West the link between monarch and God was taken for granted, and the idea that the monarch's power was divine and awarded by Deity prevailed widely until more or less smashed by modern ideologies. There is a parallel here, in that the Chinese emperor was referred to as the Son of Heaven (*tianzi*) or True Dragon (*zhenlong*), the dragon being a supernatural being. There is another parallel in the supernatural personality of the king Dushyanta. In the system of Indian myths and lore of the supernatural, his forefathers, himself and his offspring all formed a supernatural genealogy, and even his beloved Shakuntala, as seen in this play, has supernatural parentage.

Whether in *Palace of Eternal Life* or *Shakuntala*, the subject matter is so closely involved with supernatural elements that it is fair to say that the plot is actually unfolded on the supernatural level. In the case of *Palace of Eternal Life*, the plot switches between mortal reality and the supernatural in terms of location, and also at times reverts to the underlying supernatural background, the protagonists both having been immortals in their previous existence. In *Shakuntala and the Ring of Recognition* (to purposefully give it its full title here), both the magical function of the Ring and the recognition of Love are entirely due to the supernatural will, which is of course direct divine interference. The combination of imperiality and the supernatural applies a special glamour to the linguistic style and makes the plot in some ways more appealing, but the thematic aspects claim our attention more than the stylistic here, and we should ask ourselves what purpose and function the combination has in them.

Love as a personal romantic feeling is usually seen as inextricably linked with individuality, and such characteristic views should surely be reflected by literature and

the arts. As far as this is concerned, imperial love distinguishes itself from love in general. While showing the characteristics of the latter, it operates in association with characteristics normally considered opposed to it, those of collectivity and representativeness, as illustrated by these two plays.

Such association depends firstly on the protagonists' social status. In classical China the emperor was generally esteemed as the symbol of the nation, and in the heroic ages of India the king was expected to be a paragon for his people. In traditional Chinese ideology, being loyal to the monarch was the same as being patriotic, a criterion that should inform our judgements and comments on Chinese history. In heroic ages states were more of a unity and political hierarchies not so automatically divisive and conducive to internal antagonisms, the king in many ways being inseparably identified with his tribe or kingdom, and as such could be more wholly the key element in its fate, especially in times of warfare with other tribes or peoples. Such theories and attitudes are also reflected in these plays. Whatever his personal aberrations, the Emperor never entirely loses his position as a symbol of China. This point is greatly emphasised by the incident of the conflict with the rebel An Lushan. Many of the incidents relating to the Emperor, moreover, have meanings that symbolise or otherwise stress his representative status, for instance his fleeing from his capital, the enthroning of the new emperor in his stead, and the regaining of the capital.[1] Acts Twenty-eight, Thirty-one and Thirty-five all provide striking clarification of the relationship between him and his state and subjects. In *Shakuntala*, the king's image is almost of perfection, and his key significance is at times stressed both by particular stretches of verse and dramatic incidents. He is, for instance, appointed by Indra to be the commander of the army to subjugate a race of gigantic demons who are too difficult for even the gods to quell,[2] and the episode in which the king fights a heavenly messenger in the guise of a terrifying demon particularly reveals his nature as a perfect heroic.[3]

Concerning this, a conspicuous feature of imperial love in Chinese drama has been commonly recognised. Imperial love as private feelings is interwoven with the political vicissitudes of the times, and the romantic thread unwinds amid the broader setting of the happenings of society at large. This phenomenon was summed up by a concise remark from another great playwright of the early Qing, Kong Shangren (1648-1718) with reference to one of his own plays, stating his aim to be: "through the sentiment of [lovers'] union and separation to represent the feeling of [political] rise and decline (*jie lihe zhi qing, xie xingwang zhi gan*)". This view, however, underestimates the position of

[1] This is an essential reason why Hong Sheng was persecuted by the Manchu authorities.
[2] *Shakuntala*, op. cit., Act 6, pp. 105-6.
[3] Ibid., Act 6, pp. 104-5.

love and neglects the philosophical overtones that lie beyond the more tangible societal or private events. In actual fact, when monarch protagonists are conceived and rendered more abstract by literature, there is some general tendency for their individuality and particularity to recede, and their quality as representatives of a nation, a race, or even mankind to be given more prominence than in ordinary reality. Once the audience or readers are influenced by this creative tendency, they psychologically tend to identify such characters with abstract concepts and their individuality with universality. On the one hand in a play, particular events are selected for the background dramatisation onstage, and on the other, real development and evolution take place in the presentation of the concept of love, a process which has the power to envelop all within the drama, with the result that its pervasiveness within the confines of the one play can deprive characters of some individuality, relocating them within the aura of the protagonists who serve as the icons of general attitudes to love. *Shakuntala* is far less involved with societal or political upheavals, but nevertheless still retains the atmospheric vastness and augustness which characterise imperial love in the Chinese play, simply because of the taken-for-granted communion between royalty and supernaturality. That is to say, it is not the breadth of social or political life presented in the play, but the depth of the philosophical concepts, the supernatural colour and the mystical ambience that are dramaturgically decisive, as will be discussed further below.[4]

This is different from either characterisation or typification in the common critical sense. A remarkable principle of characterisation in general is its favouring individuality, while typification aims at generalising a certain group of people and a certain type of incident in order to illustrate a certain idea. These two plays of royal and imperial love, however, clearly endeavour to transcend the concrete and describe features of mankind as a whole, rejecting particularised notions of love in favour of definitions of love as something indivisible, and it is herein that lies the special essence of this kind of play.

We have stressed above the various ways in which imperiality or royalty is often connected with the supernatural. When the monarch or king stands in the position of the supreme ruler, and when he is regarded as a paragon and represents the finest essence of human beings, he approaches ideal qualities, so as to become a charismatic figure. If he is, however, envisaged as going yet further in quality, he must exceed the demarcations of ordinary Nature and enter another realm. In this circumstance, man turns into superman or supernatural figure or even into deity. Regarding this, Max Weber says:

[4] Imperial love and royal love are used to refer to essentially the same thing in this dissertation, because imperiality and kingship mean more or less the same in discussions of love, the difference being mainly in the political magnitude of the protagonists.

> In keeping with the principle of charismatic authority, the emperor, of course, fared similarly. The whole construction, after all, issued from this political habitation. The [Chinese] emperor had to prove his charismatic authority, which had been tempered by hereditary successorship. Charisma was always an extraordinary force (*maga, orenda*) and always revealed in sorcery and heroism. ... however the personal qualities which were necessary; to the charismatic image of the emperor were turned into ritualism and then into ethics by the ritualism and philosophers.[5]

and, according to Frazer, there has been a personage combining kingship and priesthood who picks up the Golden Bough after slaying his predecessor:

> The priest of Africa, if I am right, was one of those sacred kings or human divinities on whose life the welfare of the community and even the course of nature in general are believed to be intimately dependent.[6]

And furthermore:

> The union of a royal title with priestly duties was common in ancient Italy and Greece. ... Teutonic kings, again, in the old heathen days seem to have stood in the position, and to have exercised the powers, of high priests. The Emperors of China offer public sacrifices, ... The King of Madagascar was high priest of the realm.[7]

The connection between imperiality or kingship and the religious function is perfectly explicable in the light of the supernatural associations of both. This being so, even if they are not esteemed as gods, emperor and king are endowed with the ability of communicating with God or Heaven, and therefore qualified as charismatic super-personality, saviour, and so forth.

Besides the psychological mechanics of this transmutation there are many other wider social, historical and culture-specific implications, since, for instance, great imperial events and actions are by widespread Chinese tradition viewed as being foreshadowed by massive Natural upheavals and cosmic changes, hence the importance attached through the ages to astrological and calendrical studies. Even in contemporary times, similar attitudes still often emerge. For instance, in 1976, two conspicuous natural calamities took place shortly before the death of Mao Zedong, whose autocratic rule was characterised by many features of traditional imperiality. The massive flood in Henan

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[5] "City, Prince and God", in his *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, translated by Hans H. Gerth ([No publishing place] The Free Press, 1951), p. 30. He also says: "In China, as discussed above, some fundamental prehistoric events, themselves probably co-determined by the great significance of the river regulation, caused imperial authority to emerge from magical charisma" (ibid.); and: "The Chinese emperor ruled in the old genuine sense of charismatic authority (ibid.)."

[6] James George Frazer, "Between Heaven and Earth", in his *The Golden Bough: Balder the Beautiful* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), vol. 1, p. 1.

[7] "Symbolic Magic", in Frazer, in his *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. / New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900), pp. 7-8.

Province and the horrifyingly destructive earthquake in the city of Tangshan were both widely seen, beforehand and retrospectively, as harbingers of his demise.

Supernaturalness, viewable as simply an extension of imperiality, links mortal and deity in these plays, taking the mortal human out into the vast indefinability of the cosmos, and thus opening up a yet more elevated and capacious psychological realm in which ideas may be given more elbow-room, where individuality may seem more restrictive and trivial differences yet more trivial, and where love can more easily be seen as a pervasive abstract ideal and the absolute idea. In this regard John Oman argues:

> As the natural world is known by sensation and its varied comparative values, so the supernatural world is known by the sense of the holy and its sacred or absolute values: and for practical purposes, **the distinction between the Natural and the Supernatural is between comparative value and absolute**. This is not, however, different from the division into "things seen and temporal" and "things unseen and eternal", because, though in the end this may mean the fleeting and the enduring, immediately "temporal" and "eternal" are not distinctions of time, but of value.[8]

The question of supernaturality is in turn, as discussed,[9] closely linked to that of the sublime, the former clearly reinforcing the functions of the latter. The use of the sublime has the artistic power of undermining ego and self, of making persons into generalisations and individuals into collectivities. It performs a kind of assimilation, through which all privacy or private qualities are minimised and devalued, all personal joys and sorrows replaced by a mixture of awe and admiration for the sublime's magnificent grandeur and imposing might. This process is one of catharsis, through which all emotions with negative values are purified and elevated. It is an alienation of the ego as opposed to the assimilative force of creative beauty. Supernaturality finds its natural home on the plane of sublimity, itself in turn enhancing the sublime, yet the two basically belong to two different categories.

Supernaturality is here used as an expedient word of broad definition, covering a wide variety of supernatural phenomena that are otherwise specified by words such as the supernatural, myth, legend, the paranormal, the mysterious, the occult, religion and superstition. The two plays differ from each other in their supernatural aspects. The supernatural, as we have stressed, plays a prominent part in *Shakuntala*, typical examples being the wondrous forgetting of, and reminding by, the ring, which prescribes the whole direction of the plot, the miracle of Shakuntala's vanishing, the magical power of the

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[8] John Oman, *The Natural & the Supernatural* (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1931), pp. 69-70; emboldenings mine.

[9] See *Part Two. Stylistic Aspects.*

child's amulet, the strange identification of the relationship between father and son, and more minute but significant supernatural signs such as the good omen of the throbbing of the king's arm and the ill-omen of the trembling of Shakuntala's eyelid. The dominance of the supernatural in *Shakuntala* is of vast wider import, its plot dealing with the prelude to the major Indian epic *The Mahabharata*, Mahabharata being the son born of Shakuntala and Dushyanta, and mighty deities such as the chief god Indra also taking an active part in the dramatic action.[10] Yet it is the royal which is the focus for the supernatural, and in *Palace of Eternal Life* it is likewise imperiality that is the relevant centre of supernaturality.

The supernatural in *Palace of Eternal Life* also embraces subconcepts such as the religious, the folkloric, the customary, the superstitious and the paranormal, but, in contrast to *Shakuntala*, these are all largely distanced from mythology, the remnants of ancient myths being scarce in this Chinese play. One of the primary reasons for this situation would seem to be that in China, from the late seventeenth century AD onwards, in China a clearer line was drawn between the supernatural and ordinary reality, although the former continued to exercise considerable influence in manifold ways. With this clear consciousness of the essential difference between ordinary reality and the socially current imagination of the supernatural on the one hand and fictional supernaturality and reality on the other, Hong Sheng deliberately mixes these opposite perspectives, making particularly skilled use of the legendary and folkloric. The plot switches between reality and the supernatural throughout the play, and the train of incidents is presented on the ever potentially intercommunicating three levels of Heaven, Earth and the Underworld. The realistic matter is mingled mainly with two bodies of legend: that concerning the moon and that concerning the Milky Way. The important difference to note is that these two are organically interwoven on the "near" realistic plane rather than providing impact from "outside". Nor do they constitute anything akin to a *deus ex machina*, since they are integral and determining elements of the action of the plot. Firstly, the moon music and the dance of *Rainbow Skirt and Feather Garment* are vital motifs which permeate the play's whole subject-matter and parallel the realistic aspects of the plot. In a dream, Lady Yang is invited to the moon, where she hears the tune, being subsequently entrusted with the transcription of it in the mortal world, and later she presides over the rehearsal of it and performs the dance in person. After her death, moreover, she is still required to produce the score for the Moon Maiden, and it is eventually played in the

[10] "Like the Himalayas," Balwant Gargi says: "*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are part of the subconscious of the race. They have been the backbone of the people's art and morality. When Sanskrit theatre declined and ceased to be a force after the twelfth century, plays in the regional language based on *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* continued the tradition." See his *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962), p. 25.

Moon Palace where she and the Emperor are reunited. In this case, the music, which customarily always suggests the moon, is like a bright gleaming strand winding through the whole text and binding it with greater coherence.

The Moon Maiden, we note, has her own legend. The ancient account of her is very brief: After stealing her husband's elixir, she flees to the moon and become the mistress of it. In a long course of history, the supernatural tints of the legend gradually faded and the account was renewed and embellished to such an extent that it became a deeply rooted part of quasi-secular Chinese folklore. In *Palace of Eternal Life* in turn the tendency away from myth to secularisation is further confirmed by the inclusion of this old tale with a novel, refreshed literary man's meaning, contributing in a highly creative fashion that proclaims its distance from any mythological origins and further consolidating its position in the continuum of Chinese literature and Chinese folklore. That is to say, a story of mythical origin evolved in the direction of a broader cultural sense and was transformed into other cultural categories.

Secondly, the body of legend concerning the Milky Way, or "Silver River", takes an equally active part in the growth of the play's subject matter. This body of legend is of the semi-tragic love between the Cowherd and the Weaving Damsel star-gods. As a result of their secret love affair, the supreme emperor of Heaven separates them by the celestial river, the Milky Way, but as a special favour permits them to meet once a year on the Seventh of the Seventh Month by the Chinese lunar calendar, on which day magpies form a bridge over the Silver River for them. Such a legend has also gained a solid and central position in Chinese folklore. These lovers, also known as the Love Stars, have been regarded as a model of constancy and faithfulness, and by reason of this symbolic significance of theirs, their legend became entwined with the romance of Emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang, thus further entrenching its multi-dimensional nature. In this play, the Cowherd and the Weaving Damsel have stepped out of their original legendary framework and plunged fully into the character scheme, becoming active *dramatis personae*. Whereas the Moon Mistress has already made her first appearance in Act Eleven, they first appear as late as Act Twenty-two, in which the emperor and Lady Yang vow fidelity to each other on the evening of the Seventh of the Seventh Month, this episode being both preceded and followed by the tryst between the Cowherd and the Weaving Damsel. At this juncture, the mortal lovers vow to follow the immortals' example, and the immortal lovers in turn pass judgement on the earthly couple and promise to send them blessings, so that an undefined channel is thus created between Heaven and Earth, and the imperial love match is elevated by the addition of strong supernatural colour and the splendour of the sublime.

The function of the Love Stars is to provide a referential backdrop for the subject matter and impel the plot towards its harmonious celestial dénouement. It is this latter that accounts for their appearance as much as ten acts later than the Moon Maiden. Act Twenty-two is nearly halfway through the plot, and with its prediction of the heroine's death, which occurs in Act Twenty-five, only three acts later, it foreshadows the incidents in the second half of the play whereby the lovers start their love from a new beginning and different perspective and render it perfect and eternal in the realm of the supernatural. In this second half of the play, the Weaving Damsel is far more active, playing such a vital role that the development of the plot is to a considerable measure willed and effected by her. Following on from Act Twenty-two, in Act Thirty-three she looks into Lady Yang's death, subsequently ordering the regional tutelary god to resurrect Lady Yang and see her off to the Paradise of Penglai, in Act Forty-four she has a fierce debate with her lover as she argues for the reunion of Lady Yang and Emperor Minghuang, and in the final act her plea to the Supreme Heavenly Monarch is approved and the reunion takes place. It seems intentional that the interval between each of her appearances is, with the exception of that between Act Forty-four and Act Fifty (the final act), always 10 acts, this regularity serving to punctuate the rhythms of the dramatic action.

One is tempted to draw the conclusion that to the Indian audiences in the times when *Shakuntala* was first performed, the supernatural elements in the play were much more credible than to the audiences of modern industrialised nations; whereas, by comparison, *Palace of Eternal Life* deals with the supernatural with a more rationalistic attitude, so that for both its author and its early-Qing audience, supernaturality had lost its authenticity and credibility, being employed simply in the service of aesthetics and philosophy. These assumptions seem to fit in general, but the matter requires further exploration, and we should be wary of presuming to know the nature especially of ancient Indian audiences, since at all times human groupings tend to be pluralistic in their attitudes, and it may have been that overall the Indian audience of those times was more prepared to enter into the mood of greater supernaturality.

It is generally believed that in ancient or more innocent times the content of stated beliefs in the supernatural was taken to be true in the same way that the natural sciences are widely believed in nowadays,[11] but in fact, this presumption is too simplistic. The

[11] Cf. Aylen: "Since Plato, there have been two senses of the word 'myth', and now it is normally taken as meaning an invented story, not literally true, symbolizing some part of our psychological experience which cannot otherwise be described. This sense is unknown before Plato. The myths of tragedy are the stories of ancient history, and were quite certainly believed in as literally true." Leo Aylen, *Greek Tragedy and the Modern World* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1964), p. 33.

natural sciences resort to reason and work on our rationality, while supernatural doctrine rather resorts to the authority and power of received statements. Natural science is believed basically only when it seems in accordance with our rationality, and it is indeed often challenged by the latter; but supernatural creeds demand the sacrifice of rationality. They are in contradiction with the general tenets of rationality and the exercise of logic. This being the case, people may yield to their power without, however, taking them literally in their conscious reasoning. In a very important sense, the tales of the supernatural are, in the first instance, a kind of artistic creation with an intentioned and specific purpose, rather than a spontaneous form of rationality by which the force of Nature is explained.

Defining the nature of supernatural tales as being a result of artistic activity, may throw new light on the supernaturality in *Shakuntala*. The play is inextricably bound up with supernaturality, but all the same, that is not to say that the supernaturality finds its way into the play through the author's subconscious. On the contrary, it is a result of purposeful and deliberate pursuit. The supernatural in the play is not merely a replica of the basic supernatural tales behind it, but is a work of the author's creatively artistic weaving. composition, in turn having a generative effect on the play's theme. It is probably true that for the audience of ancient times, many accounts of the supernatural seemed credible, and indeed this may also be true of the modern world, but the credibility is not crucial to the enjoyment of this drama, and it is the artistic intention that clearly takes first place. Indeed, in many circumstances, the credibility of the supernatural elements is quite irrelevant and supernaturality is simply an artistic device complete unto itself. Even if the supernatural elements are believable, the credibility does not necessarily come from the supernatural tales or items, but may be inspired by the authenticity and internal coherence of the artistic creativity, which causes the audience, however disinclined to give the supernatural credence in normal everyday life, to co-operate and agree to suspend its disbelief in order to wholeheartedly enter, enjoyably, or profitably in spiritual terms, into the pattern of the play.

The supernaturality in *Palace of Eternal Life* has little everyday credibility. Seen in this light, the artifice and artificiality of mixing reality and the supernatural are clearly perceptible, and the audiences in that age who had a sophisticated and solid sense of reality, can hardly have taken the supernatural elements of the play seriously as reality in their everyday minds. Quite patently, the supernatural in this drama is more overtly artistic and fictional than that in *Shakuntala*, the links with the moon, the Milky Way legends, the Paradise of Penglai and the Netherworld, for instance, all having little or nothing to do with any solid religious associations with the source tale and historical

accounts, and being an embroidering and reorganisation by the playwright solely intended to give pleasurable and exciting scope to the audience's powers of fantasy.

The playwright's intention, however, is only one side of the coin, and we should perhaps try to separate the avowedly supernatural and the seemingly unknown. Some of the original audiences of *Palace of Eternal Life* might have found the vaguer or more general supernaturality of the play, such as the matters of afterlife, previous life and rebirth, rather as features of the paranormal, as indeed might large parts of modern audiences, even if not believing them to have happened to the particular protagonists of this drama. Many records exist of those who have claimed to witness things beyond normal experience and the scope of orthodox scientific theory and knowledge, and it is perfectly logical to suppose that we at present have by no means a cut and dried knowledge of all that is possible. It is too simplistic to denigrate this kind of phenomenon as superstition or even to determine it as being supernatural, since it might be natural. These phenomena are at least equally as plausible in the West, for instance, as are ghosts:

> In a reality of this sort, a wide open field where arcane forces are at work, subject to mysterious laws, ghosts find themselves quite at home. They have the most natural air in the world; the living meet them without surprise, they establish normal everyday relationships, they indulge in intense dialogue. Naturally it is the clairvoyance of the race of solitaries which allows the privilege of communicating with spirits.[12]

In the Western world arguments abound over dowsing, divination, pendulum, telepathy, premonition, prophecy and so forth which could conceivably one day be proven to have a scientific basis, but which for now are widely adjudged to be in the no-man's land between the normal and the paranormal. Many such phenomena are, for instance, recorded by Colin Wilson in his *Mystery*,[13] and the phenomenon of telepathy is recognised by Carl G. Jung from a very scholarly point of view, he remarking:

> I am thinking of those spatial and temporal telepathic phenomena which as we know are much easier to ignore than to explain. In this regard, science, with a few praiseworthy exceptions, has so far taken the easier path of ignoring them.[14]

In a similar regard Sylvia Cranston and Carey Williams say:

> It may come as a surprise to learn that the reincarnational outlook is not, as commonly supposed, a product of Eastern religion. It has had numerous adherents in the

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[12] Cesare Segre, *Semiotics and Literary Criticism* (Paris: Mouton & Co. N. V., 1973), p. 179.

[13] See *Mystery*, op. cit..

[14] Carl G. Jung, "The Soul and Death", in Herman Feifel (ed.), *The Meaning of Death* (New York, etc.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 12.

> West,[15] . . . Western minds would appear especially fitted to apply reincarnation practically, precisely because they have not been born into this philosophy. Because it is not their cultural milieu, they are better able to objectively analyze its relevance in today's world.[16]

The paranormal in general, however, seems to have been even more acceptable in China and India and elsewhere in the East through the ages, or so M. Winternitz asserts in his *History of Indian Literature*:

> Curse, magic-stone, divine messenger -- these are things that, in the opinion of the people of the West, appear as too much of dependence on the supernatural powers for breaking of the knots for dramatic treatment. But the Oriental people can just say that it was not too much for Indian listeners and spectators, and that they had absolute faith, and that they considered all as possible and natural, what appears to the people of the West as arbitrary interference in human behaviour.[17]

Audiences, however, now as then, may indeed in general choose to believe or disbelieve or to maintain ambivalence.

The Chinese and Indian share a credulousness, actual or posed, towards the supernatural and mysterious. For example, the description of Lady Yang's resurrection in *Palace of Eternal life* is fairly compatible with the account of reincarnation in the Vedas:

> The Vedas tell us that the soul is responsible for his lives in the material world, where he is trapped in the cycle of reincarnation, material body after material body. If he likes, he can remain suffering in the prison house of material existence. Or he can return to his original home in the spiritual world. Although God arranges through the material energy to give the living beings the bodies they desire, the Lord's true desire is that the conditioned souls get off the punishing merry-go-round of material life and return home, back to Godhead.[18]

These circumstances should be called extraordinary rather supernatural, since they might conceivably be natural occurrences that we have not yet understood or recognised. The unbiased bystander may believe or disbelieve or feel ambivalence.

Imperial and royal love clearly had its own irreplaceable significance and vast implications in traditional China and ancient India, hence its use as one of the most

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[15] Sylvia Cranston & Carey Williams, *Reincarnation: A new horizon in science, religion, and society* (New York: Julian Press [a division of Crown Publishers, Inc.], 1984), p. xii.

[16]. Ibid., p. xiii.

[17] M.Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, vol. 3, part 1, op. cit., p. 247.

[18] Prabhupada, "Three Histories of Reincarnation", in his *Coming Back*, op. cit., p. 59.

popular motifs of dramatic literature, in some of the most outstanding of theatrical and literary masterpieces.

CHAPTER IV: Love Freed of Time and Space's Bonds

In accordance with the constant upheavals and turbulence of Chinese society for most of this century, Chinese attitudes to love have undergone constant evolution and violent revolution. The turmoil and repressions of the Cultural Revolution and the effects of the import of Occidental ideologies rendered the situtation all the more complex. The constant renewal of the idea of love and the changes wrought by history in general have created certain objective demands for formal alterations in contemporary drama, which has continued, however, to be unable, even had it so wished, to extricate itself from this ancient and enduring theme.

Echoing the spirit of the new times, and reflecting the new kinds of subject matter that have naturally arisen, contemporary Chinese traditional-style drama is subject to ongoing changes in its histrionic structures and technical organisms. At the same time, just as with ideas of love, so the modern Chinese dramaturgical outlook has also been considerably influenced by the West.

Since the beginning of this century, Chinese drama, owing to abrupt and violent impacts from the West, has been split in both theory and practice. These impacts have to a great extent been the result of cultural and philosophical influences imported from the late-Qing period, when the slogan of "Western Learning Gradually Entering the East (*Xixue dongjian*)" was in vogue, and inspirations from Europe and America exercised a clear effect and acted as a catalyst for changes in Chinese culture. The great power and capriciousness of traditional Chinese culture created restraining barriers to the ease of influx of Western ideas, but also meant that it had sufficient depth and potential to make it seem that absorbing Western knowledge fully into Chinese patterns would pose no particular problems, hence the appeal of the suggestion by Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) that "Chinese learning should be the theoretical background and Western learning put to practical use (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*)"[1], meaning that priority should be given

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[1]Cf. Ma Sen, *Zhongguo xiandai xiju de liangdu xichao* (Taipei: Wenhua-Shenghuo-Xinzhi Chubanshe,1991), p. 33; and *Zhongguo dai-baikequanshu: Zhongguo wenxue*, vol. 2, s.v. Zhang Zhidong (by Sun Jing): ". . . For his whole life Zhang adhered to '*Zhongxue weiti, Xixue weiyong*', the principle of Western Industrialism [*Yangwu-pai*], and promoted "*Zhongxue zhi shenxin, Xixue ying shishi* [Chinese learning cultivates personality, while Western learning deals with practical matters]". (Zhongguo Dabaikequanshu Zong-bianjibu Zhongguo Wenxue Bianji-weiyuanhui, Zhongguo Dabaikequanshu Chubanshe, 1986, p. 1248); and cf. *Cihai:Yijiuliuwunian xinbianben* [new ed., 1965] (Hongkong: Zhonghuashuju Xianggang-fenju, 1979), s.v. Zhang Zhidong (anonymous): ". . . He published *Exhortation to Study* (*Quanxue-pian*) in 1980 and advanced the theory of Western

to Chinese culture and useful Western knowledge absorbed into it as an organic part. In spite of such aspirations for smooth absorption, sometimes there was serious collision rather than harmonious convergence, and this is what actually occurred in the field of drama. Modern Western dramaturgy was sharply at odds with traditional Chinese theatrical practice and theory, and therefore the two ran as two opposed streams in China, the rivalry persisting to this day.

Although traditional Chinese dramaturgy has in this century repeatedly faced the danger of being replaced by exotic forms of theatre, it has generally been unprepared to accept any of the essential elements of modern Western dramatic performance apart from a certain amount of scenery and lighting and so forth. None the less, there continues to be a strong impulse to absorb Western theory. The last decade or so has witnessed a number of examples of more wholesale mixtures of the Chinese theatrical legacy and modern Western histrionic invention, and an outstanding example of this is a play belonging in general to the traditional genre known as Sichuan drama (*Chuanju*) and entitled *Golden Lotus* (*Pan Jinlian*) by Wei Minglun (1941-)[2]. It has much in common with an English-language play entitled *Top Girls*, by Caryl Churchill (1938-), which was produced in 1982. Besides providing insights into the convergence of Chinese and Western drama theory in China, a comparison of these two plays proffers information concerning different attitudes to love in this day and age. One of the striking similarities between these two love plays is that they choose to twist and deform the temporal order and spatial structure, thus emancipating themselves from the bonds of geographical locations and ordinary chronological restrictions, in order to create new set of co-ordinates for the plays, the axes of which can be adjusted or commingled at the playwrights' discretion. The characters are borrowed from various historical periods and geographical areas, their sources being both fiction and reality and covering multifarious walks of life. Linked to this formal resemblance between the two dramas is their thematic similarity. Running through various periods and settings of history, they touch on various love affairs factual and fictional, from which they create a general schema of *dramatis personae*, and the particularities of their subject matter are paralleled by sweeping conceptual generalisations which elevate their themes to the plane of philosophical statement.

Industrialism [*Yangwu-pai*]: '**Old** learning as the theoretical background and **New** learning for practical use.'" (Emboldenings mine.) Ibid., p. 2060.

[2] It was written in 1982 and first staged in 1986. See Wang Fei-yun, "Old Opera, New Moral", *Free China Review* (Taipei: 1995), p. 70.

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The staging of *Golden Lotus* made a sharper impact on the minds of the audiences. Most of them were shocked when it was premièred in 1986,[3] because of its brand-new interpretation of its subject matter, and its novel stylistic techniques for plumbing deeper layers of connotation. With regard to theme, it diametrically opposes what would be the conventional moral evaluation of its heroine's romantic doings, and with regard to its style, that too is likewise in opposition to established standards.

The play's "revolution" thus takes place in both the philosophy of its theme and in its dramaturgical technique. Golden Lotus, the title character, is taken from traditional Chinese fiction, principally China's most famous bandit novel *Water Margin* (*Shui-hu zhuan*), dating from the fourteenth century AD, and China's most famous classic of seamy sex, *Gold Vase Plum-Blossom* (*Jin Ping Mei*), dating from the sixteenth century AD. By her fictional background she has long become fixed in the general consciousness as a starkly negative female image, a lewd woman lorn of virtue or chastity, obsessed by lust. In this play, however, the case against her is overturned and the historical verdict reversed, so that her new image thus breathes a fresh air of personal emancipation, reflecting some more modern Chinese attitudes to love and sexuality. The spotlight is also in the process turned fully on the traditional bias against her. The way in which judgements on her personality have hitherto been a "frame-up" is also examined from the angles of contemporary ideas, in particular that of women's liberation as opposed to patriarchal domination, the social injustices inflicted on the heroine being clearly exposed, and it being shown how she was oppressed, humiliated, damaged and eventually destroyed by society, as a sacrificial victim of the prevalent ethics.

In order to reverse the historical verdict, the play adopts an anti-traditional dramaturgy and creative outlook based on *absurdity*. Most striking is the characterisation. The fundamental structure of the character system is based on the novel, *Water Margin*, which provides the essential raw material for the dramatic subject matter. Into its framework, however, are inserted many other characters which do not exist in the novel, some of whom are historical figures lifted from reality, such as Empress Wu Zetian (who reigned 684-705) and Shangguan Wan'er (664-710), and others of whom are fictional characters borrowed from such a variety of artistic works as classical novels and dramas, contemporary film, foreign novels and so on. These characters include, for example, Jia Baoyu, Red Maid, Lü Shasha, and Anna Karenina. Apart from this, theatrical innovation is equally in evidence, this basically Sichuan Opera

[3] At Zigong, in Sichuan Province, and later staged in Nanjing, Shanghai and Peking, subsequently being grafted into other local opera genres and staged by other troupes, with the result that it drew nation-wide attention and aroused vehement debate among critics.

play being a blend with various other genres such as modern pop song, disco, Peking Opera, Kunqu, Henan Opera, Yue Opera (of Jiangsu Province), and so forth, "creating a musical smorgasbord"[4].

Startling innovation along these lines is demanded by the play's bold attempt to rehabilitate the heroine, the exceptional system of characterisation aiming at overcoming the restrictions of historical period and geographical distance in order that the subject matter be allowed more freely to make linkages and inter-references on the plane of ideas, and to help break down the possible ideological or customary attitudinal prejudices that a more conventional approach might evoke, encourage or permit. The same purpose may be observed in the play's apparently grotesque or absurd mixture of all manner of other theatrical elements, and that purpose is essentially one of satire. It ridicules the orthodox sentence on the heroine, and blasphemes the deity of traditional moral judgement, thus inspiring the audience to re-examine its moral evaluations of the subject matter in a more untrammelled and uninhibited fashion. In this way the thematic content goes hand in hand with the artistic techniques, both complementing each other.

In this drama, traditional Chinese theatre art is modernised and national style Westernised. On many occasions modernisation and Westernisation may of course be assumed to be synonyms.[5] For one thing, the Chinese word used for "absurd", *huangdan*, is used in a way that directly reflects the use of the English or French word "absurd" in Western dramaturgy. More importantly, the play is permeated by an attitude of absurdity, and its dramatic composition corresponds to the theories of the Western Theatre of Absurdity. This latter similarity, however, is only an atmospheric affectation or general attitude rather than any particular influence in the realm of technique or ideas,[6] and the play is clearly far removed from the products of any Western school of the Theatre of Absurdity. We should be aware that, apart from actual assimilations and absorptions of exotic culture, its spontaneous convergence with that Western culture in some aspects is an occurrence to be expected of its period and appropriate to the mood

[4] Shiao-ling Yu, "Pan Jinlian: The Story of One Woman and Four Men -- A New Sichuan Opera", *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring, 1993, p. 3.

[5] For example, Ma Sen says: "The term 'Westernisation' can be replaced by 'modernisation': they have different intentions but the same connotation." See his *Zhongguo xiandai xiju de liangdu xichao* (Taipei: Wenhua-Shenghuo-Xinzhi Chubanshe,1991), p. 23.

[6] This play could be classified into the category of Theatre of the Absurd even had it not recived any influence from the Western counterparts which form this theatrical school, since such a school was formed naturally rather than consciously, as Martin Esslin says: "It must be stressed, however, that the dramatists whose works are here [Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet and so on] do not form part of any self-proclaimed or self-conscious school or movement. On the contrary, each of the writers in question is an individual who regards himself as a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in his private world. Each has his own personal approach to both subject-matter and form; his own root sources, and background." *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962), pp. 15-6.

in China at that time. What to the uninitiated Westerner might seem echoes of Western Theatre of Absurdity, an importation from abroad, can actually be seen as a natural fruition from China's own aesthetic history and historical dramaturgy. The location of connections with foreign theory is in general useful, indeed essential, but it would be dangerous and misleading to assume an overall influence without a most cautious and meticulous examination into the matter, since such assumptions might well lead to an over-ready and superficial attribution to external causes, to the neglect of more thorough-going explorations of internal, inherent artistic reasons.

The attitude of absurdity in this play is largely embodied in its absurd characterisations, which are also a semiotic system for determining the meaning of the image of the heroine.

The play *Golden Lotus* draws its stuff from Chapters 23 and 24 of the novel *Water Margin* and a part of the novel *Gold Vase Plum blossom.* In the former, the heroine's image is painted with clearly negative pigments, that is to say she is extremely immoral, and in the latter, the author holds a neutral attitude towards the same image of her and depicts her romantic affairs in an appreciative and admiring tone, so that the image of her is viewed amorally. In this play, however, she becomes a romantic spirit seeking for the emancipation of her personality, but eventually falling victim to social injustice and moral hypocrisy. This image of her gains so much commendable colour as to elevate itself immensely above the normal moral plane and is quite transformed. In this play, Golden Lotus is rehabilitated and the playwright shows profound sympathy with her.

Although the three Golden Lotuses have similar personal stories, yet as an artistic image, each of them differs from the others in the essence of her personality. This is largely due to the different semiotic systems at work in drama.

The character of Golden Lotus in the novel *Water Margin* is straightforwardly evil. Golden Lotus and her various love affairs are severely criticised in the text itself. *Water Margin* is neither a love novel nor sensuous fiction, concentrating as it does on boisterous rebellings against social injustices and the oppressive rule of the Song dynasty. Against such a background, Golden Lotus is morally condemned as a lustful woman with no virtue or chastity, but, more importantly, as an evil-doer violating justice. She is classified as an aspect of the unjust forces against which her brother-in-law and other heroic rebels and bandits are fighting. This literary relationship between Golden Lotus and the brothers Wu typifies the novel, which designs similar gender conflicts for other positive characters such as Song Jiang, Lin Chong and so on.[7] The relationship between

[7] As Nie Gannu says: "*Water Margin* as a whole holds a disdaining attitude to women". As quoted in "Duiyu lishi he xianshi de shenchen fansi" by Hu Bangwei, in *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping* (Peking: Shenghuo-Dushu-Xinzhi Sanlian-shudian, 1986), p. 125.

the opposite sexes is interpreted as that between instinctive lust and civilised mores, and further likened to that between injustice and justice.[8]

The other novel, *Gold Vase Plum-blossom,* focuses on hedonistic sexuality, being about the hero's licentious life but largely excluding moral judgement. Golden Lotus is one of the hero's many sexual partners, and these women with their lives form a referential system for Golden Lotus. In this system, Golden Lotus' sexual life is interpreted as amoral, and it is taken therefore that the extra-marital affairs between her and the hero Ximen Qing are beyond criticism,[9] their offence against the sacrosanct norms of conventional society, including even the adulterous feelings of Golden Lotus for her brother-in-law, the Younger Wu, not being judged by any ethical standard. The readers, or many of them, surely cannot have helped but appreciate the descriptions of the character's adventure and subconsciously share a certain amount of empathy, this moral subversion no doubt partly accounting for why this novel has been banned for so long during the past few centuries, and indeed has been frowned upon by the authorities no less, indeed probably more, in recent mainland China.

In this play, Golden Lotus is given a totally different moral significance, the moral codes which prohibit love and sex outside monogamous marriage are interpreted as hypocritical, and the natural aspiration embodied by the heroine is justified as resistance of patriarchal oppression and fulfilment of a woman's consciousness of her personality. Wei Minglun seems to intend to function in China as Freud has done in the West, as Gail Finney points out: "As a corollary Freud calls attention to the 'double code of morality'

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[8] Similar phenomena in the West are pointed out: "Our reassessment of literary relationships between men and women is also colored by the anthropological thesis that differentiation of genders is an expression of the more fundamental antithesis between nature and culture. . . . Indeed, the coupling of a heroine and a villainess [sic] who represent this polarity is one of the commonplaces of literature." See "Introduction" to *The Representation of Women in Fiction,* edited by Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. xviii. The sexual relationship is also interpreted along this line by philosophical works, for instance by Paglia: "The identification of women with nature was universal in prehistory. In hunting or agrarian societies dependent upon nature, femaleness was honored as an immanent principle of fertility. As culture progressed, crafts and commerce supplied a concentration of resources freeing men from the caprices of weather or the handicap of geography. With nature at one remove, femaleness receded in importance." Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 7-8; and again: "Women and nature have an age-old association -- an affiliation that has persisted throughout culture, language, and history. Their ancient interconnections have been dramatized by the simultaneity of two recent social movements -- women's liberation, symbolized in its controversial infancy by Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963), and the ecology movement, which built up during the 1960s and finally captured national attention on Earth Day, 1970." Carolyn Merchant, "Introduction: Women and ecology", in her *The Death of Nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution* (London: Wildwood House, 1982), p. xv.

[9] In this novel she eventually becomes the fifth wife of Ximen.

that tolerates lapses in the male but condemns them in the female."[10] To do this, four male characters also being taken out of the novels to form the basic dramatic milieu, various other characters are further borrowed from different times and locations, thus forming a multi-dimensional set of relationships and co-ordinates, that combines with philosophical and psychological analyses to produce a rich characterisation of the heroine from various angles.

The greatest difficulty for the author is perhaps that of Golden Lotus as a general literary image. In this respect, as Elam says, "we can not leave at home the whole framework of more general cultural, ideological, ethical and epistemological principles which we apply in our extra-theatrical activities. On the contrary, the performance will inevitably make continual appeal to our general understanding of the world", and "distinguish the general cultural codes through which we make sense of our lives from the particular theatrical and dramatic norms at work, since these diverse factors will be equally and simultaneously responsible for our understanding of the text."[11] So Wei Minglun applies a semiotic methodology to his artistic creation, consciously or unconsciously. In order to rid the audience of any preconceptions, *Golden Lotus* very briefly draws an outline of the general context. Disengaging itself from the complications of traditional moral assessments, it reinforces and recreates the image of Squire Zhang from the novel *Water Margin*, and by focusing on the conflict between Golden Lotus and him, takes the initial step towards setting up a new system of correlations. Each of the characters then becomes a semiotic signifier for the other. The Squire fails to fulfil his lust for Golden Lotus and therefore schemes an absurd marriage for her in retaliation. This sets the nature of the basic dramatic conflict, and also determines the principal tendencies of the ensuing action, which are that, as an artistic creation embodying the playwright's subjective intention, the image of Golden Lotus achieves an aura of moral rightness deserving of sympathy, while that of Squire Zhang stands for vicious power and warrants recrimination.

In the novel of *Water Margin*, there is only a shadowy equivalent to the Squire Zhang of the play, not being even so much as a character and only mentioned once. In the play, however, Squire Zhang is as important as anyone except the heroine, being a vital symbol in the semiotic system and contributing a great deal to the interpretation of the heroine's character. The novel *Water Margin* merely mentions him in passing when the heroine's family background and personal history are being recounted, as follows:

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[10] Gail Finney, *Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism, and European theater at the turn of the century* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 39.

[11] Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London & New York: Metheun, 1980), pp. 52-3.

> In a rich and powerful family in the county called Clear River, there is a maid, who's family name is Pan, and personal name Golden Lotus; She is just in her twelfth year, and rather attractive. Her master kept on chasing after her, but the girl simply told her mistress of the matter, and never gave in to him. Therefore her master, nursing his resentment, married her off to the Elder Wu. He didn't charge him a penny, but on the contrary, presented a dowry that occasioned him great loss, in effect letting the Elder Wu get a wife for nothing.[12]

This master is not even given a name in *Water Margin.*

In the novel *Gold Vase Plum-blossom,* the equivalent to the play's Squire Zhang is described in more detail. There is a man called Squire Zhang. He is over sixty, and his wife is managing the household with a rod of iron, so he has no pretty maid to amuse himself with. Moved by his sadness, his wife brings him two singsong girls, one called Golden Lotus, who is fair, dainty, and intelligent. Later the master hungers for closer acquaintance, and on one occasion has his way with her. After this affair, his health begin to deteriorate and he becomes deaf and has rheumy eyes and a runny nose. When the illicit affair is exposed, his wife devises all manner of punishments for the girl. The master feels sorry for Golden Lotus, secretly provides her with a trousseau and looks for an appropriate man to marry her off to. Eventually the Elder Wu, an attendant in his house, is chosen, by which means she is not lost to the Squire, who is thus able to continue his affair with her. Since the Elder Wu is not much of a man, the girl regards him with an intense hatred and also resents Squire Zhang, whom she curses. [13]

The contrast between the terse narration in the relevant mention in *Water Margin* and the detailed description in the drama is strikingly sharp, and a comparison with *Gold Vase Plum-blossom* brings to light a difference of tendencies in treatment between this latter novel and the drama.

The drama has preserved the basic structure of Golden Lotus's experiences as related in the novels, but supplies greater detail, inserting many minutiae into the framework. A tiny particle present in the novels has been considerably amplified, so as to serve as a self-contained unit in the chain of the plot, forming a complete act, which elevates personal affairs to the level of a serious social problem. This act is entitled "The First Man", and plays a very important part in realising the author's intention of vindicating the protagonist. Owing to alterations carried out by the play, the *dramatis*

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[12] Chen Xizhong (ed.), *Shui-hu zhuan hui-ping ben* (Peking: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1981), ch. 23, pp. 432-3; translation mine.

[13] See *The Golden Lotus: A translation from the Chinese original of the novel Chin P'ing Mei,* translated by Clement Ederton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1939), vol. 1, pp. 24-6. Also cf. *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei* / Princeton Library of Asian Translations, translated by David Tod Roy (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), v. 1, chs. 1-10.

personae and characterisations are transformed, and from the point of departure the angle of vision is changed as well. The subtitle of the play is *A Woman and Four Men*, and the first of the men, having occupied the prime position, predetermines Golden Lotus's fate and fortune.

To facilitate our discussions, let us give some rough outline of the drama's semiotic system, beginning with analyses of the conflict in Act One, "The First Man". This is set in the house of Squire Zhang, and begins with Zhang's being visited by the Elder Wu. Instead of the vague figure in *Water Margin*, Squire Zhang is presented as a flesh and blood person, and in great contrast to *Gold Vase Plum-blossom,* which wallows in all kinds and extremes of affairs and sexual behaviour due to its amoral attitude. Act One expands upon the conflict between Golden Lotus and Squire Zhang. To start with, Zhang is seen contriving, with ill intent, to marry Golden Lotus to the Elder Wu, a dwarf and idiot.

Following on this, Golden Lotus comes onstage, beautiful and graceful in sharp contrast to her would-be "Heaven-destined" husband. In addition to her external beauty, her exquisite internal world is filled with romantic vitality as exhibited in the following passage:

> GOLDEN LOTUS. (Singing)
> *With the autumnal view last night*
> *The garden and courtyard were permeated,*
> *Leaning on the garden-rail*
> *I was looking at the Twin Star.*
> *I lost parental love as early as in my childhood,*
> *I aspire to romantic affection in my prime now.*
> *I hate to be a plant surviving in such a powerful family,*
> *I like to hear the flower-seller calling along the streets.*
> *My heart soars with the butterflies over the wall,*
> *I wander dreamily in the ocean of the populace*
> *Seeking for an intimate companion.*[14]

By this juncture, the conflict has intensified, as the increasingly evident contrast between the pair shows how incompatible they are, and how absurd it is for them to be linked with one another. At this point, the girl's image is primarily set as a humiliated and damaged one, which thus gains the sympathy of the audience. As the plot unfolds, the conflict builds up. Apprised of her dreadful marital destination, Golden Lotus is shocked:

> GOLDEN LOTUS. (Drops her cup and plate, cries.) Hea--ven! (Sings.)
> *Being wicked, you mismatch nuptial partners!*
> *Ruthless, you yet feign to be a merciful Buddha!*

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[14] Quotations of this play are my translations from *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping* (Peking: Shenghuo-Dushu-Xinzhi Sanlianshudian, 1986); p. 11.

The register of Hades turns into that of Venus,
You thought up a new trick to harm your female slave!
As a mute taking medical herbs.
Neither can I swallow my bitterness,
Nor can I talk about it.
My bosom is filled with anger,
My cheeks bear running tears![15]

We should note that such a conflict between Golden Lotus and Squire Zhang functions as a means to the end of gaining the girl humanitarian sympathy, and its symbolic meaning is only clarified if it is placed against its broader political and cultural background. Since the beginning of this century, for various reasons, there has been a strong general inclination in China for artists, especially those of "realistic" inclinations and liberal thinking, to depict the antagonism between the lowly and the elites, showing their sympathies as lying with the former. This has been due to the fierce internal conflicts within Chinese society, outside aggressions, and influences from the West, including Communist ideology and exotic literary influences, with a specially strong input from 19th century English and Russian realist literature. Far from abating, this tendency has continued to flourish to such an extent that the very term "realism" has come to signify works that lay much emphasis on exposing social injustice, highlighting the hardships occasioned by the economic disparities between rich and poor and the gulf in power between the ordinary populace and the politically privileged. What originally was a spontaneous reaction against the darker aspects of society and a natural sympathy with the "humiliated and maltreated", has, however, often been appropriated by ideological doctrines and dogmas, and in the process become politicised and ossified.

Both the humanitarian attitude and its dogmatic ossifications have not only guided modern Chinese authors in their creations, but also guided readers and audiences in their appreciation. By understanding a political background that has been coloured mainly by Marxism, it is possible to identify the symbolic meaning of both Golden Lotus and Squire Zhang with certitude. When we do so, we see that the function of their symbolism is to yet further lay bare injustices:

SQUIRE ZHANG. Well, it's no use crying. If you'll be reasonable, this marriage register can be altered a bit, can be changed a little, right?

GOLDEN LOTUS. Could I ask, how will you alter it, how will you change it?

SQUIRE ZHANG. (With a different tone.) If you wouldn't be the Elder Wu's wife, you must be my concubine! No other way! Golden Lotus, come and behold!

. . .

. . .

SQUIRE ZHANG. (At the end of his wits.)

[15] Ibid, p. 13.

The rose is thorny, and
The mermaid never comes to the angler.
Well,
Polite persuasion is not as good as rough hand,
I'll turn this Mercy Hall into a pleasure house!

(Loud music with percussion. Faced with the unfavourable situation, she is about to escape through the door. Zhang drags her back and shuts the door. With lustful smile, he approaches her in a frightening manner.)

(Struggling, she bites him hard on the wrist, and lifts up the candle-stick to defend herself.)[16]

This is the first step to take Golden Lotus out of her traditional semiotic framework of characterisation and to endow her personality with positive values. The playwright's aims in this direction appear too obvious, and his treatment too formulaic, but all the same it is not difficult to appreciate his purpose, since the traditional view of Golden Lotus has been too unchallengedly and powerfully one-sided. In conjunction with the unfolding of his plot, he with deliberate contrariness supplies the detail omitted by both novels and constructs a new and intricate narrative frame as a bearer of totally fresh implications. To reinforce the positive value of his new image of Golden Lotus, he depicts tense psychological conflict within the heroine's internal world, along with analyses of her moral outlook, and the pains that she takes in deciding moral dilemmas. When Squire Zhang has revealed his lust for her, he tries to beguile and seduce her, singing:

SQUIRE ZHANG.

Half of the city is my property,
The Mistress Throne is reserved for you.
A Local Emperor is being accompanied by the Local Empress,
. . .
We'll take pleasure in all ways for all our life.

GOLDEN LOTUS. (Sings.)

. . .
On the left is the ugly dwarf,
On the right is a clothed beast,
Poor me,
Do I have a third way to go?
Oh, yes,
Fling me into the lotus pond,
All troubles will be drowned.

(She races out of the hall. A gust of night breeze comes, She stops in front of the door.)

GOLDEN LOTUS (touched by the scenery, sings).

Grass and trees have feelings,
How lovely are the breeze and moon!
My youth is like a flower,

[16] Ibid, pp. 13-6.

Which has just opened.
Let me go on, on the road of life,
Let me swallow the bitter wine with tears . . .
SQUIRE ZHANG (urging). Whom do you choose?
GOLDEN LOTUS (singing.)
I'd rather be the spouse of the dwarf,
Than share the pillow with the wolf! [17]

Thus the marriage is arranged. The misery resulting from social injustice sows the seed of the subsequent tragedy, and all aspects of the aftermath are directly linked to this social source, in comparison with which personal choice and responsibility play a decidedly weak part.

This basic symbolic schematisation is enriched and augmented in Act Two, where another semiotic system is set up, which consists of two symbols: Golden Lotus and the Elder Wu. This new system can be viewed as a linear development of the first, and also as a lateral expansion of it, aiming to reveal the conflict between marriage and feelings. This conflict originally exists in both novels, but only this play shows great interest in it and elevates it to the sociological level. The novels only present a vague picture of family life, but our play peeps behind the curtain and provides an extreme caricature of its dullness and unpleasantness. This act retains the contrast and conflict that are shown in the novels as occurring between the wife and the husband, but greatly sharpens and intensifies them. Both characters are so conceptually polarised as to attain the nature of symbols. In both novels, there is only a sharp contrast between Golden Lotus's amazing beauty and the Elder Wu's serious physical flaws, but in this play the contrast finds its way more importantly into their internal worlds.

The significance of Golden Lotus's inner qualities is increased, so that in the play she is not only beautiful, but also cultivated and accomplished, and cherishes exquisite romantic desires. The image of her by now has much in common with the traditional Chinese type of the beautiful lady of noble family background and personal history of moral decorum. On the other hand, the Elder Wu's mental disability is also now stressed, in addition to his physical handicap, and he is depicted as a coward, with a very lacklustre and withered inner self, lorn of ambition, self-esteem, moral standards and a sense of justice, and totally removed from any romantic inspiration. His withered spirit results in his withered sexual capacity, his inner barrenness of character leading to physical infertility.

[17] Ibid, pp. 14-5.

With the characters turned into symbols, the play gains in expressionism, and the playwright so manipulates the basic subject-matter that it becomes absurd. This absurdity represents that of irrationality and what runs counter to human nature.

Each act adds a new character and forms a new semiotic system, and in the process all the systems begin to attain a certain confluence with each other, each new step deepening the overall significance of the confluence.

Act Three introduces the Younger Wu, who stands in sharp contrast to his elder brother, and matches Golden Lotus perfectly. The Younger Wu, however, is an incarnation of established ethical strengths, being restricted to current moral codes. This personal limitation reflects that of his supposed historical period.

Act Four introduces the fourth man, Ximen Qing. He appears at first glance to match Golden Lotus, but his spiritual world is greatly outshone by hers. In contrast to the Younger Wu, who is full of traditional morality and senses of obligation and righteousness, this man has no moral scruples at all. He seems very different from the Elder Wu, but as a matter of fact, their spiritual worlds are equally barren and colourless, except for the fact that the Elder Wu is honest whereas Ximen has endless sexual lust, his character being typical of the licentious hedonist.

After the four men have been introduced each in turn, the structure of the semiotic system is complete. With each man as a referential symbol, the heroine's symbolic meaning is clarified and heightened. To Squire Zhang, she is the marred and degraded woman; to the Elder Wu she is the victim for his marriage against all reason; to the Younger Wu, she is the sacrificial offering to traditional ethics and notions of righteousness; and to Ximen she is simply a female animal, the object of his lust.

This semiotic system aims as a whole at re-defining the heroine semantically, on the premise that the traditional Golden Lotus has been wrongly defined by similar semantic techniques.[18]

We should pay closer attention to what may be called the "temporal overlapping" and "spatial interweaving" in the play's steady expansion of its semiotic system. Corresponding to the thematic absurdity of rehabilitating Golden Lotus is the play's "absurd" treatment of time and space in their formative aspects. When reversing the verdict on Golden Lotus, the play reverses the normal concepts of time and space.[19] There are two sets of co-ordinates (two systems of time-space measurement) in the play, one dramatic and the other conceptual. The former is ordinary or mundane, serving the

[18] "Pan Jinlian" in Chinese is tantamount to a common noun designating all female villains in general, as "Shylock" designates the ruthless usurer.

[19] Shiao-ling Yu says: "The author called his play 'absurd theatre' -- absurd in the sense that it disregards the conventional concept of time and space." See, op.cit., p. 1.

development of dramatic action, while the latter is metaphysical and provides extra dimensions to assist the unfolding of the analytical arguments. The former is about particularities, while the latter lifts the particular case to the philosophical level and brings it into the realm of universality.

The relationships between these two sets of co-ordinates are complicated. They each dominate the stage alternately, and more often than not they join each other and merge into a set of multi-dimensional co-ordinates that is the major source of the work's absurdity.

The different sets of co-ordinates provide locales for characters from different times and countries to encounter each other, which involves the formation of two opposite and complementary character-schemes, those of "characters within the play" and "characters outside the play". Once the interrelations of the characters have acquired stable shape, they in turn determine the particular nature of the scenes or locales and are indicative of the historical period. Owing to this dialectical relationship between characters and time-space, stage settings and scenery are, according to the stage-directions, to be kept simple, in order that time and space be as flexible as the characters are spatially and chronologically mobile.

Each character-scheme is itself a semiotic system in which every character is a symbol, a signifier, whose meaning has been historically prescribed and publicly accepted. Beneath the surface of the dramatic action is the movement of ideas and concepts, so that the train of actions thus also becomes a group of symbols, conditioned by a series of logical inductions and itself further indicating a sequence of logical inductions. In this sense, the absurdity is not anti-rational, but, on the contrary, highly rational.[20]

The literary constitution of this play is also special. The stage directions not only instruct as to acting, but also offer the audience or readers emotional judgements, in poetic and literary form, on the dramatic action. In addition, the play contains a most novel passage, which, taking the place of the usual list of *dramatis personae,* not only introduces the play's characters, but, headed with a quotation from Belinsky, proceeds then to indicate time and space, in a diction which seems at first glance unnecessarily poetic and emotional:

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[20] In this respect the play distinguishes itself from the Western school which "strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought" (Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, op. cit., p. 17), since, on the contrary, the dramatist seems never happy with giving up his reasoning elucidation of the social absurdity in the subject matter, which makes his work closer to the plays about social problems. The overflowing rationality of attitude in this play has even made its theme too obvious and too didactic.

God knows in what times the events take place?
Nobody in the tragedy belongs to history, but to the poet, although each character has a historical name.

. . .

-- Belinsky: On *Hamlet*

TIMES: *Over dynasties and through reigns, no time is specified.*

PLACE: *Striding countries and going beyond continents, no space is defined.*

SCENERY: *Do not use sophisticated scenery, and lighting with special effects is needed. On the backdrop is a big character for "play", which changes into different scripts such as the Clerk Script, Model Script, Seal Script and Grass Script in different acts. On each side of the stage is set a staircase, on the left of which is written huang ["absurdity"], and on the right dan* ["absurdity"].

ACTS: . . .

CHARACTERS WITHIN THE PLAY:	**CHARACTERS OUTSIDE THE PLAY:**
Golden Lotus	*Lü Shasha*
the Younger Wu	*Shi Naian*
the Elder Wu	*Empress Wu*
Ximen Qing	*Anna Karenina*
Squire Zhang	*Female Chief Justice*
Old Woman Wang	*Jia Baoyu*
Rascal A	*Tiny Mandarin*
Rascal B	*Modern Scoundrel*
Rascal C	Shangguan Wan'er

OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS: . . . [21]

There is a coincidance between the play's conclusions on history and attitudes current in China during the 1980s, epitomised in the interplay between the characters Shi Naian and Lü Shasha, both "characters outside the play".[22] The multi-dimensional set of dramatic co-ordinates attempts to disengage the old story of the basic subject matter from its particular historical framework and from the self-contained ancient Chinese cultural structure, and render it more modern by setting it in contemporary times so as to enable it to reflect the psychology of the twentieth century. Once the core incident is taken from its original semiotic system in fact, its original meaning is automatically

[21] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping*, op. cit., pp. 1- 2.

[22] "Characters outside the play" (*juwai ren*), Wei Minglun's term used in the stage direction. As opposed to "Characters within the play" (*juzhong ren*). It refers to those who, coming from different time and space, do not participate in the dramatic incidents and in the main do not contribute to the development of the plot.

changed and the original conclusion no longer valid. A new referential system is formed and new meanings generated.

This intention is clearly seen as early as in the Prelude. Once the tableau and the scene of Golden Lotus's dying have been presented, Shi Naian and Lü Shasha enter from either side of the stage. The former is the generally supposed author of *Water Margin*, the novel that has exercised such a key influence in the widespread negative judgements on Golden Lotus, and the other is a major character in *No. 5, Garden Street* (*Huayuan-jie wuhao*), a film based on a novel of the same title[23], who has had fallen into a dilemma somewhat similar to that of Golden Lotus. Below is the argument between these two characters who are from totally different dimensions, one being real and historical and the other fictional and contemporary. As they dispute, history and contemporary matters clash, sparking off ideas. Shi Naian and Lü Shasha again share the stage at the end of final act, and later on his speech and her singing conclude the epilogue of the play:

> SHI NAIAN (shouting). My book does not care for posterity. Come on, Younger Wu, kill her!
>
> (The Younger Wu stabs her in the chest. Blackout. All vanish.)
>
> (The spotlight directly on Golden Lotus, who is writhing round with her hand on her chest, and then collapses into a pool of blood.)
>
> (Enter Shasha with the electric guitar, playing pensively.)
>
> LÜ SHASHA.
>
> *My guitar changes key and plays an ancient tune,*
> *Just listen to all the schools disputing on moral right and wrong . . .*
>
> THE END[24]

This responds to the Prelude and underlines the nature of the conflict of ideas.

Shi Naian and Lü Shasha as "characters outside the play" are visual symbols designating the clash between ideas of different eras. As in the case of the Expressionist theatre, the author has stripped the "characters of individuality and reduced them (in the manner of medieval moralities) to abstract personifications embodying a particular viewpoint. They exist, therefore, as symbols rather than people".[25] This conflict forms the basic dramatic theme and permeates the whole play.

Looking closer at the interrelation between individuality and collectivity and the function of "characters outside the play" as an ordered scheme, we discover that the latter's dates or supposed lives over-stride a huge span of time and of geographical breadth. The following are some of the characters, derived from various sources:

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[23] The novel by Li Guowen, published in the early 80s, and the film and the TV series shown around 1984.

[24] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping*, op. cit., p. 69.

[25] Glynne Wickham, *A History of the Theatre* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1985), p. 230.

1. Jia Baoyu. This character enters towards the end of the first act. He is a symbol for tenderness and affection towards maltreated girls and for deep sympathy towards the wretched plights of women. He is originally a major character from the famous novel *Red Chamber dream* by Cao Xueqin (1715-1763), and transfer from that novel to this "Water Margin" play reminds the audience of Cao's attitudes to women as opposed to those of Shi Naian, casting a more positive light on Golden Lotus by implicitly likening her to the twelve positive female characters in Cao's novel.

2. Anna Karenina. She enters towards the end of Act Two, which focuses on the dullness of a marriage without love. Because Tolstoy's novel is well known and highly valued in China, her symbolic meaning would be clear to most of the audience. Anna is generally considered a victim of hypocritical morality which was challenged by the new spirit of emancipation of the individual. Her extra-marital love which has generally been approved of in China is analogous to Golden Lotus's later romantic impulse. Anna's image at the moment of her appearance raises the question of divorce, and in this point, she is a parallel to Lü Shasha who has also obtained a divorce after a long struggle. At this juncture, she and Shasha are complementary, together pointing out the irrationality and inhumanity of the marital system of the posited time.

3. Red Maiden. In some versions there is a character from China's most famous traditional play *West Wing (Xi-xiang ji)*, [26] the soubrette called Red Maiden. She occurs at the beginning of Act Three when Golden Lotus and the Younger Wu meet for the first time, and tries to carry out her traditional task as matchmaker in the cause of love by free choice. This character suggests the romance of Zhang Sheng and Cui Little Oriole, the protagonists of *West Wing* and a greatly admired romantic pair in all manner of literary and entertainment genres through the ages. Her presence and activities here encourage the audience to place Golden Lotus and the Younger Wu in the same brackets as these romantic paragons.

4. Empress Wu Zetian. Towards end of Act Three, the fierce Empress Wu Zetian appears. She was a real-life empress who created her own dynasty (684-705). Representing a kind of feminism, she violently condemns the hypocritical nature of patriarchal society and its morality.

Anna and Empress Wu re-enter towards the end of Act Four when the dramatic conflict is becoming white-hot and the plot approaching its climax. Each of them stands for the opposite solution: murder on the one hand and suicide on the other. Anna re-performs her tragic dying, this negative and passive action serving as a foil to the positive and active elements of her death, she being murdered rather than committing suicide.

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[26] For instance, in the video of *Pan Jinlian*, directed by Liu Dayou, performed by the Zigong-shi Chuanju Tuan and produced by Sichuan-sheng Wenhua-Ting.

The "characters outside the play" communicate with those "inside the play" in a limited manner, but cannot really interfere with the dramatic incidents or affect the direction of the plot. Nevertheless, even if the two schemes meet only by mechanical coincidence, they create a new system of multi-dimensional co-ordinate. This makes it exceedingly convenient for the playwright to present and interpret the subject matter in any dimension he pleases, dramatic or conceptual, realistic or symbolic, physical or metaphysical. It is on the ideological or metaphysical dimension that the different character schemes contact each other.

The "characters outside the play" present an array of female images, all of whom are against or opposed in attitude or nature to the unjust institution of patriarchy. These "female characters from other stories, including those in the opening scene, also show up periodically and appeal on Pan's [Golden Lotus'] behalf."[27] Besides Shasha, Anna, Empress Wu, Shanguan Wan'er and Red Maiden, others such as Yan Xijiao, Pan Qiaoyun, Madame Jia and Bai Xiuying also flash upon the scene in the prologue. The latter group is of "bad women" and is represented by the heroine Golden Lotus, referred to as "the No. One Representative", and Lü Shasha shares Golden Lotus' hardships and miseries in one way or another. Of the "characters outside the play" two are major male characters, Shi Naian and Jia Baoyu. They each stand for an opposite attitude to women in general. For example:

> SHASHA [to Shi Naian]. . . . The pity is, you disparaged too many women in your novel, and killed too many of them. . .[28]

> ANNA. . . .
> *In the world*
> *All happy families has the same happiness,*
> *Each miserable family has its different misery!* [29]

> ANNA.
> *In one China are two females,*
> *In Floral-garden Street -- is the sweet smile,*
> *In Purple-stone Street -- is the miserable sigh!*[30]

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[27] Wang Fei-yun, "Old Opera, New Moral", op. cit., p. 73.
[28] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping,* op. cit., p. 6.
[29] Ibid., p. 29.
[30] Ibid., pp. 29-30. "Floral-garden Street" is where Shasha (the Heroine in *No. 5, Garden Street,* who eventually obtained a divorce, lives, and "Purple-stone Street" where Golden Lotus lives.

> EMPRESS WU. Ah !. . . in all dynasties, man may have several concubines, and the emperor can have three thousand court maids, . . . If it is reasonable for emperors to lead a promiscuous life, should it be criminal for common women to indulge in romance?[31]

By these means, Golden Lotus is identified as an individual, while her misery is related to the problems of women's social status and she is thus associated with collectivity and universality.

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The multi-dimensional nature of the play is what concocts its tragic conflict. It is actually hard or impossible to categorise this play according to such traditional critical terms as tragedy, comedy, farce, melodrama, tragicomedy and so on, because of its essentially anti-traditional style. All the same, it is still well worth noting that its primary conflict is typically tragic, a rare phenomenon in Chinese dramatic history.

The tragic elements of the dramatic conflict are due to the irreconcilable antagonism between opposing conceptual forces, which create the tragic structure and contention.

Another salient conflict in the play is that between times and moralities. In the first instance, various time dimensions co-exist within the play. All the "characters within the play" share a particular and objective dimension, and each character outside the play has its own specific dimension. "Characters outside the play" can be categorised as belonging to one of two dimensions: the historical or the modern, the former of which applies to Shi Naian, who represents the force of traditional ideology, while the latter is a generic category of all dimensions for the rest of the "characters outside the play" who bear a common hostility to Shi Naian. It is in this way that the opposite sets of ideas are presented. The dimension for "characters within the play" is fairly independent and self-sufficient, because its drama is rooted in normal reality. Nevertheless, it is by no means exclusive, but is open to the "characters outside the play"; that is to say, this dramatic dimension inclines to merge all the others, forming what could be termed a multi-dimensional dimension.

As the dramatic dimension is open to all "characters outside the play", "characters within the play" and "characters outside the play" interact, and the dramatic conflict

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[31] Ibid., p. 46. Empress Wu, who historically was shared by her father and son, is here a highly conceptualised image, striking out against hypocrisy in general attitudes to adultery which is considered the first major crime committed by Golden Lotus (the other being murder). Cf. John F. Benton: "In both primitive Roman and Germanic laws, only women were bound by the chain of marriage, and a man was considered an adulterer only if he seduced a married woman. Even in the second feudal age it was considered altogether unusual for a husband to remain faithful to his wife." See "Clio and Venus: A historical view of medieval love", in F. X. Newman (ed.), *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (New York: Research Foundation of State University of New York, 1968), p. 24.

among "characters within the play" is paralleled by the conflict of ideas represented by "characters outside the play". In these circumstances, each of the "characters within the play" is either supported or undermined by a moral force, and their personal frustrations are analogous to the philosophical conflict between Shi Naian and Lü Shasha, and other such conflicts. In other words, each of the "characters within the play" becomes symbolic.

In a supernatural manner, the "characters within the play" have jumped out of their original particular historical time, some to join the future, some to adhere to present actuality, and some to linger in the past. To particularise, Golden Lotus is about to break with the literary-historical limitations of her time, the Younger Wu stays in his time, and some other characters, such as Squire Zhang and Ximen Qing, are detached from all time, including their own original chronological setting.

It is clear that Golden Lotus's romantic impulses, personal sorrow and moral dilemma are all related to a new time, as shown by her endless conflict with her surroundings, her aims being neither contained within nor allowed by her original era, but belonging to a higher ethical level of the future. That this is so is confirmed by other characterisations, both male and female, such as Anna, Shasha, Red Maiden, Jia Baoyu and so on. In this semiotically referential system, her romantic impulsiveness is directly connected with notions of the emancipation of the individual in nineteenth century Europe and the re-thinking of love, sex and marriage in twentieth century China.

Thus the tragic conflict takes shape, this concept of tragedy being the orthodox one prevailing in modern mainland China and concurring with the Marxist proposition that tragic collision lies "between the historically necessary postulate and the impossibility of its execution in practice."[32] It is clear that the playwright is conscious of such a thesis. Besides the linear conflict between different times, the tragedy is also due to the latitudinal concepts represented by each opposed part. When the character becomes representative and typical, it represents the essence of its category, thus becoming the embodiment of a concept and of a set of related ideas. When this occurs, the interpersonal conflict becomes one between concepts, and such a character is a tragic one. This Hegelian idea has had some influence on both theory and practice in the drama of modern China, and also leaves its trace on this play. [33]

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[32] Frederick [Friedrich] Engels, "Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle", in *Karl Marx/ Frederick Engels/ Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), vol. 40, p. 445.

[33] Cf. Hegel: "The heroes of Greek classical tragedy are confronted by circumstances in which, after firmly identifying themselves with the one ethical 'pathos' which alone corresponds to their own already established nature, they necessarily come into conflict with the opposite but equally justified ethical power. . . . It is true, therefore, that character and an ethical end *may* coincide, but since aims, passions, and the subjective inner life are all particular [and not universal], this coincidence is not the *essential* foundation and objective condition of the depth and beauty of a [modern] drama." Brackets

The latitudinal concept also relies very much on the multi-dimensional co-ordinate system which mixes different times and spaces. Firstly, when such females as Shasha, Anna and Empress Wu are brought into the same co-ordinate set, they become aligned together and exercise a collective effect. Against different historical backgrounds, they are each met with the same social issue of love, sexuality and marriage, and faced with social prejudice and a traditional moral bias against women. Owing to the implicit thematic logic, the heroine Golden Lotus is naturally involved with this alignment, and therefore shares the same conflict. In this way her personal bitterness is made a social one and her destiny in romance becomes a question of the emancipation of the individual and the liberation of women, and in these conditions her individual purpose is strengthened by social forces and her character rendered a conceptual symbol animated by its semiotic context.

Thus the subject matter is brought out of the confines of a romantic affair and limited notion of female chastity, and her struggle is made to resemble female resistance against the patriarchal establishment. In the matter of theory, her action on the dramatic surface is neither due to her own sexuality nor to her romantic character, but to the social undercurrent underlying her visual portrayal. In the matter of style, this enters into the realm of the sublime, which is a typical aesthetic effect of tragedy.

Owing to the alignment of these females together, all male characters "within the play" are likewise automatically arranged into another alignment, which manifests their collective qualities despite their great diversity in temperament, morals and education. The four men, Squire Zhang, the Elder Wu, the Younger Wu and Ximen Qing, strikingly contrast with one another in many ways, but on the issue of women's social status and female individual choice with regard to sex and marriage, they maintain a tacit agreement. None of them has any slightest conscious opinion on female rights, freedom of choice and self-esteem in sexual and marital matters, and their concern is for women's obligations, commitments, obedience and chastity, as imposed upon women by society for the sexual convenience of men. Squire Zhang and Ximen share attitudes with each other even more than with the others, both treating the heroine as merely a sexual machine. The brothers Wu seem as different as chalk and cheese, but they both consider themselves duty bound to defend the traditional norms of morality that serve as a paradoxically both strong and frail bond for preserving marital ties. It is important to realise that, in such a semiotic context, the characters become flatter rather than rounder,

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original, in R. P. Draper (ed.), *Tragedy: Development in Criticism* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980), pp. 118-9. Also Aristotle, who says that for tragedy "the character between these two extremes, [is] that of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune [is] brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error of frailty." My additions in brackets. See his *Poetics*, in Bernard F. Dukore (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), p. 42.

more abstract than concrete, this realisation helping one to understand the Younger Wu's characterisation. In the novel and in the general view, his character makes him a champion fighting against injustice, and a righteous brother with a strong sense of fraternal obligation, but these characteristics fade in comparison with his role as a faithful defender of the traditional moral code that so militates against women.

So far we have seen that through the interlocking of time and space and different dimensions, individual characters are transmuted into types and by acquiring typicality enable interpersonal conflicts involving love and sex to become a struggle between opposed concepts, social forces and moralities.

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Turning to another important aspect of *Golden Lotus*, we note the use of death as a dramaturgical solution and means of reconciliation.[34] Death is a powerful aesthetic concept favoured by dramatic tragedy. In this play, it receives great attention. Dying scenes such as murder and suicide are painted vividly, and death functions as a symbol of considerable significance.

This function diverges from general Chinese theatrical tradition, and bears the influence of modern Western dramaturgy and philosophy.[35] In many traditional Chinese plays, although death may frequent the stage, for instance, in military plays (or martial plays, *wuxi*), there is still a lack of tragic atmosphere, and death is rarely treated as a

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[34] For instance, it is a solution for the marital problems caused by the impossibility of divorce; cf. Lawrence Stone: "Divorce is thus now as central to our culture and experience as death and taxes. . . . It must never be forgotten that England in the early modern period was neither a separating nor a divorcing society: death was virtually the sole agent for dissolving marriage. L. Stone, "The Background: A non-separating and non-divorcing society", in his *Road to Divorce: A history of the making and breaking of marriage in England* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 [first published in 1990]), p. 2. And: ". . . divorce is an event which in its symbolic significance to society is comparable only to capital punishment: they are both socially approved, accepted, and irrevocable terminations, whether of a marriage or a life. Both carry a heavy baggage of passionately felt moral principles and symbolic meaning." Ibid, p. 6.

[35] Richard Wagner says, for instance: "*The celebration of such a Death is the noblest thing that men can enter on.* It reveals to us the nature of this one man, laid bare by death, the whole content of universal human nature. But we fix this revelation in surest hold of memory by the conscious *representation* of the Death itself and, in order to make its purport clear to us, by the representation of those actions which found their necessary conclusion in that death." Italics original. See "The Art-Work of the Future", in Dukore, Bernard F. (ed.), *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.,1974), p. 793; and Frederic J. Hoffman says: "[In twentieth-century literature] death was explained in one or another kind of *myth* and "story," [*sic*], in which superior natures accounted for the moral deficiencies of inferior ones, sacrificed themselves so that the moral economy might be better balanced, or superintended areas of punishment, purgation, or reward. In these circumstances, controlled by whatever systematic theology, death (however disagreeable as a physical experience it might be) was considered a point in time on the way to eternity, or the conclusion of time and the beginning of eternity." Frederick J. Hoffman, "Mortality and Modern Literature", in Herman Feifel (ed.), *The Meaning of Death* (New York, etc.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 134.

philosophical category or utilised for symbolic expression. In this play, however, the motif of death is fully developed, and its philosophical and aesthetic significance are investigated, although this still leaves the play far from being a tragedy.

Death in *Golden Lotus* is the inevitable outcome of the tragic conflict, and due to the irreconcilable antagonism between opposite moral forces. It results from the interlocking of different times of opposed historical tenors. That is to say, it is a logical necessity resulting from that opposition.

The development of the death motif closely involves the heroine's fortunes, which go through the following phases: an intended suicide, an attempted suicide by Anna, a murder instigated by Ximen and encouraged by Empress Wu, and Golden Lotus's being killed as the finale. Each time, death serves as a plausible solution to an otherwise irreconcilable conflict. It is clear that the conflicts are caused by the intermingling of the different times past and present, this point often being stressed when the issue of death is broached. For example, when Anna advises the heroine to commit suicide, the play has the following section:

> ANNA (sings).
> *I stand over the other side of the globe!*
> *I stand in another section of history!*
> *The clock is turning backward, . . .*[36]

She enacts her tragic dying, then stands up from the blood:

> *I have died --*
> *My soul is purified,*
> *I am released from misery.*
> *This is the only way out for women!*
> . . .
> *See you in the Netherworld!*[37]

Anna's death is a passive resistance evoked by the spirit of individual emancipation, and when she offers suicide as a solution to Golden Lotus, times are merged. For another example, immediately before Golden Lotus is murdered we have the following:

> SHASHA. Suppose I were Golden Lotus!
> FEMALE CHIEF JUSTICE. You? If you were in that society, you would fall just as Golden Lotus!
> SHASHA (shocked). Alas! (asking again.) Suppose Golden Lotus were me?
> FEMALE CHIEF JUSTICE. Then she might gain happiness.[38]

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[36] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping,* op. cit., p. 62.
[37] Ibid., p. 63.
[38] Ibid., p. 57.

In this sense, Golden Lotus should not take much, if any, personal responsibility, because she stands for a certain general force behind which her individual personality vanishes.[39]

It is important to realise that the irreconcilability of the conflict is due to the large degree of reasonableness about the morality current in olden times and great rationality of that of the new time. The former determines that she cannot win, because the old ideological forces have not lost their rationality with vitality. It is precisely for this reason that the play is genuinely tragic in this sense, by the standards of both Aristotle and Hegel, a rare phenomenon in the history of traditional Chinese drama. When justice is neither done nor injustice destroyed, the outcome is tragic. Despite some of their unfortunate associations, the traditional Chinese concepts of filial piety and fraternal duty are complex highly civilised ethical notions, with their echoes in many other societies, and with enduring values for the world nowadays as always. In the light of these concepts, the Younger Wu's revenging of his elder brother is moral, a fact that is no wise deniable or denied, not even in this play. The heroine is in this respect responsible, since she is not only a symbol representing the spirit of an age and historical trends, but also an individual of flesh and blood in the dramatic dimension.

More importantly, however, the deaths, including that of the male part, are philosophically the inevitable outcome of paradox in such an absurd marriage. In this connection, Derrida says:

> So given there, standing up face to face, are two totalities. Singular totalities, since they also make two, are two: absolute, insoluble contradiction, impossible to live with. The relationship can only be violent. The two consciousnesses structurally need each other, but they can get themselves recognized only in abolishing, or at least in relieving, the singularity of the other -- which includes it. . . . Death, the "demonstration" that "is achieved only with death," destroys singularity, relentlessly hounds what in the other consciousness-family remains singular.[40]

And he also relates the speculative marriage in a Hegelian sense:

> Love and marriage belong to the element of the freedom of consciousness and suppose the *Aufhebung* or sexual difference. The war described by pragmatic anthropology can take place in it, in *fact*, but only insofar as the partners are not *true* spouses, as the essence of marriage is not accomplished. . . . The speculative dialectics must be thought: the being-one (*Einssein*) of the spouses, the consciousness of one in that of the other, such

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[39] Not only revealing the serious historical conflict, her death also functions as a balance to her murder. Historical and customary verdict on Golden Lotus appeals to both ethical and judicial authority, as she is accused of adultery and murder. This play highlights her death, which has largely been overlooked or ignored, in order to mitigate her crime and make the traditional sentence invalid.

[40] Derrida, Jacques, "Sexual Difference in Philosophy", in Peggy Kamuf (ed.), *A Derrida Reader* (New York & others: Harvester Wheatsheaf, a division of Simon & Schuster International Group, 1991), pp. 348-9.

> is the *medium*, the *middle* of exchange. The sexual opposition is relieved there. As means or mediation, this middle has two sides: the one by which the two spouses recognize one another and relieve their difference; the other, by which this consciousness must be, as middle, opposed to their own and must bear its relief.[41]

When these two aspects of Golden Lotus are interwoven, the question becomes very complicated, and no matter whether in analytical argument or intuitive appreciation, paralogisms and conflicts are readily perceived. Especially given the great number of Chinese who are not yet accustomed to the modern kind of artistic work with a philosophical content and lack acquaintance with the concept of dramatic tragedy in the Western sense, small wonder this play is often misunderstood.

When different historical spiritual values clash violently and with equal strength, the only plausible solution is for the physical being to give up its existence, that physical being in this drama the heroine as an individual, rather than as a symbol for the spirit of new times, since her romantic spirit never dies and her physical destruction is merely a negative confirmation of her spiritual tenacity, as we see dramatised in the following scene when she is being killed by the Younger Wu:

> GOLDEN LOTUS. Ha, ha . . . that today I can die by your hand, counts as a great fortune in my misfortune![42]

This is the eternal triumph of the romantic spirit, and also an everlasting condemnation of injustice.

Death becomes symbolic in the play, too. It is a physical defeat, but in another sense, a spiritual triumph, just as in everyday existence, death is fully endowed with dialectical connotations. It means surrender, but can also signify resistance. It is a submission, but can also be a protest. It may be because of aspirations from the past, but can also be an inspiration to the future. It is intimately bound up with life. Whether in the arts or in reality, death has deep and wide connotations and evokes a wide variety of reactions. In this play, death is the solution to antagonisms between different eras, and also an equaliser creating or restoring equilibrium between personal waywardness and social responsibility. That is to say, Golden Lotus's guilt, if any such thing exists, can be balanced by her death, taken as a reparation for her guilt. Only by her death can great sympathy be aroused in the audience, and, by this means, can the audience be lifted out of trivial arguments over moralistic rights and wrongs with regard to women's chastity and ethical obligations, and start to seek for a real and profound solution to the conflict and for the intrinsic causes of the tragedy.

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[41] Ibid., p. 343.
[42] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping,* op. cit., p. 67.

Connected with the above is the question of the aesthetic effect of death. Major death scenes in this play are painted in bright pigments and arouse feelings of sublimity. When the curtain is raised, it turns light after a stage blackout, then a tableau of "the Younger Wu killing his sister in law" emerges from the lingering darkness, performed against a musical backdrop of choral singing. The moment the chorus stops, the statues in the tableau are animated, and the Younger Wu is killing Golden Lotus, both dancing, him with his shining sword, and her with her flowing hair. The Younger Wu tears her blouse and stabs her in the chest. She cries in agony, hand covering her chest, and falls down like some leaf falling from its tree. Then there is another stage blackout, and Golden Lotus sinks into her own blood.

The same scene is repeated in the epilogue, with some alterations:

> GOLDEN LOTUS (grabbing the handle of his sword). Younger Wu, do you want my head, or my heart!
>
> THE YOUNGER WU (clenching his teeth). I will dig your heart out!
>
> GOLDEN LOTUS. Come on then, let your sword enter here!
>
> (She tears her collarband, approaching him. He is taken by surprise, stepping backward in alarm.)
>
> (She laughs a tragic laugh, looking totally in contrast to her appearance at the start of the play.)
>
> . . .
>
> (Golden Lotus tears her blouse violently, exposing her scarlet underclothing which looks like a pond of limpid blood.) [43]

This is quite evidently a symbolic action, and its symbolic meaning is reinforced by a non-histrionic element -- the stage direction.

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The play presents a certain conflict between different semiotic contexts and creative ambivalence. The semiotic context for the heroine is an artistic creation, but this creation is actually a reflection of logical reality. That is to say, as a character who has passed through the hands of several authors of different eras, Golden Lotus is now seen in the light of several different referential systems simultaneously. The playwright is creative in the sense that he finds a logical line with which to stitch together the existing symbols into a cohesive semiotic context, but nevertheless this context has been in existence to some extent before his invention, although hitherto hidden by various largely non-pertinent unfavourable symbols, or confused by other semiotic contexts. In such a case,

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[43] Ibid., pp. 67-8.

> One should not be led to expect that the various planes and systems will necessarily set up a sort of 'prearranged harmony', or worse, that such a harmony should be taken as a criterion for judgement. A work of art often expresses itself by means of contrasts and contradictions; its levels can refer to and echo one another, but they can also realize a tension, suggest a crisis.[44]

This remark helps us account for the quandary met with in trying to understand the heroine's image, it being the case that, just as Stanley Fish thinks, "reading always takes place within some 'interpretative community' and that reasoned choices are always possible within an 'interpretative community'", and "each community creates its own texts and hence its own standards of competence".[45]

When Golden Lotus is placed in the context of this drama, the significance of her character gains in clarity of definition. In this respect, the context is decisive, but that is not to say that her inherent character does not matter. In fact, her character also serves as a symbol, finding its special place in the context and being interpreted by the other symbols, so that her character, having its own distinctive qualities, is a determining factor in whether its symbolism is accepted or rejected by the particular semiotic system, whether it is interpreted as being positive or negative in moral implication. In this respect too, the playwright is creative. Golden Lotus's character in the play is based on the previously existing framework which has already been fixed in the cultural structure, but with the development of the drama's action her characterisation is considerably enriched.

Different people may locate this characterisation of her in different symbolic systems, according to their specific outlook and methods of thinking, which lead them to draw different conclusions concerning the same one image. As early as the 1920s, Ouyang Yuqian tried to have the cultural injustice done to Golden Lotus removed. He wrote a Spoken Drama called *Pan Jinlian* and later himself impersonated the heroine in a Peking opera version of it, with the famous Peking opera actor Zhou Xinfang as the Younger Wu. We are told that, "The heroine in this work is depicted as a female who admires strength and loves beauty".[46] Such individualistic treatments of this traditional subject matter received enthusiastic reactions from the audiences.[47] In 1983 when Hu Bangwei wrote an article about Golden Lotus for a nation-wide conference on *Water Margin* he expressed ideas concerning Pan similar to those of this play, and other

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[44] Cesare Segre, *Semiotics and Literary Criticism* (Paris: Mouton & Co. N. V., 1973), p. 70.

[45] See G. Douglas Atkin & Laura Morrow, "Whirl without End: Audience-oriented criticism", in *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 88.

[46] Tian Han, "Nanguoshe shilue", in Tian Han & others (eds.), *Zhongguo huaju-yundong wushi-zhounian shiliao-ji* (Peking: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1958), p. 122.

[47] Also cf. Wei Minglun, "Wo zuozhe yige feichang 'huangdan'-de meng", in *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping* (Peking: Shenghuo-Dushu-Xinzhi Sanlianshudian, 1988), p. 70.

scholars showed themselves similarly aware of the problem that the assessment of her character involves.[48] A negative attitude towards her character has, however, always been the overwhelmingly mainstream view, so that *Golden Lotus* has evoked as much controversy as entertainment sensation.[49] This controversy has been due to the antagonism between the opposite semiotic contexts, an antagonism which might have been felt only subconsciously by the audiences. When the context offered by the play meets with too strong an opposition from the traditional context latent in audience and critics alike, the play's rationale is totally resisted, and its ideas completely rejected as "absurdity" in the derogatory rather than the technical sense. Many people have a strong aversion to this drama, while many others cheer it enthusiastically. Many scholars ascribe the controversy to conflict between "feudalism" and "anti-feudalism", that is between traditionalism and anti-traditionalism, saying, for example, that "although feudalism as a regime has been overthrown, the feudal ideology and morality . . . still affect and even control some people's thought, speech and behaviour, . . . That is why when Wei Minglun presented onstage his absurd Sichuan drama *Golden Lotus*, which bears strong anti-feudalistic attitudes, . . . the play caused all of the audience without exception to think for a long, long time."[50] This remark is a rather politically biased view. On the other hand, many of those who are against the play are not yet aware either that their aversion is due to a conflict in their minds between the opposite semiotic contexts, but remain still confined within narrow moral outlooks, seeking to clear up such questions as, for example, that posed in the following:

> It involves the question of whether feudal morality should be completely wiped out or partly inherited. . . . China is an enthusiastic and also serious nation, and its national character has been formed and developed over a long course of social practice. . . . Are

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[48] In 1983, Hu Bangwei wrote an article entitled *Pan Jinlian* for the Second Nation-wide Conference on *Shui-hu zhuan*, which, as he later claims, completely agrees with Wei's understanding about Golden Lotus and the act of Wu's killing his sister-in-law; Nie Gannu expresses a similar idea in his preface to *Zhongguo gudian xiaoshuo lun-ji*. Cf. Hu Bangwei, "Dui lishi he xianshi-de shenchen fansi", in *Pan Jinlian*, op. cit., p. 124.

[49] Another reason for the controversy is that, both audiences and critics have not yet come to be entirely familiar with, or even particularly accustomed to, such somewhat Westernised tragic treatment of the heroine. The play in this repsect bears the marks of influence of Hegel who says: "Therefore we should not interpret such a conclusion as a purely moral outcome where evil is punished and virtue rewarded, i.e. 'when vice vomits, virtue sits at table'. Here there is no question at all of an introverted personality's subjective reflection and its good and evil, but, when the collision was complete, of the vision of an affirmative reconciliation and the equal validity of both the powers that were in conflict." See his "Poetry", in his *Aesthetics*, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 1216. Chinese habitually apply their sense of morality to a character and express their benevolent wishes in a denouement wherein good is fostered and evil punished (*yang-shan cheng-e*).

[50] Hu Zhiqiang, "Shidai jingshen-de jiaozi", in *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping* (Peking: Shenghuo-Dushu-Xinzhi Sanlianshudian, 1986), p. 137.

they excellent Chinese moral principles that we should inherit and promote? Or are they feudal apparitions which should be destroyed with a sharp sword?"[51]

There have been many arguments about the moral rights and wrongs of this play, but there are few people, if any, debating the causes of so many vehement arguments. The foregoing may contribute to elucidate the intrinsic reasons from the angle of cultural structure and semiotic context. In addition, the controversy is due to the inertia of standards of appreciation, people not yet having become accustomed to this kind of creative art, so that it is difficult for them to decode the symbolic system that it proffers. If it had been produced in the Western world, it would have caused neither such a sensation nor controversy, and fruitful comparisons may be made in this respect with a salient English-language drama called *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill[52].

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It is often of dramatic or philosophical interest to juxtapose a pair of works deriving from a geographically distant location but, owing to obvious tangible influences between them, fairly close in their ideas. It is likely to be even more informative, however, if one compares works of evident and undeniable similarity but between which there seems to have been no contact or flow of influence. It is yet more fascinating when this latter kind of comparison enables one to detect a universal pattern of evolution spontaneously at work in both works. *Golden Lotus* and *Top Girls* fall within this category.

Top Girls was written between 1980 and 1981, and directed by Max Stafford-Clark at the Royal Court in 1982. The playwright pointed out: ". . . in 1977 I started thinking about a play that would have a lot of women characters doing various jobs and of course the same year Thatcher got in for the first time. "[53] As she says, it is indeed a feature and a striking one of the play that it resorts almost exclusively to female characters, but what is peculiar is that these women come from a wide time span, from the ninth to the twentieth century, and cover a huge geographical span, from Asia to Europe. This exactly corresponds with the device of the Chinese play *Golden Lotus*. *Top Girls* borrows characters from a Brueghel painting and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and this too is in tune with *Golden Lotus,* which likewise relocates a big group of characters

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[51] Zhang Yihe, "Chuanju 'Pan Jin Lian'-de shiwu yu qushi", in *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping*, op. cit., pp. 160-1.

[52] Born in 1938 in London, lived in Montreal, Canada from 1948 to 1955, read English Language and Literature at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford from 1957 to 1960. Cf. Geraldine Cousin, *Churchill: The playwright* (London: Methuen Drama: 1989), p. 9.

[53] As quoted in "Introduction" to *Caryl Churchill Plays: Two*, Methuen Drama (London & New Hampshire, 1990), p. ix.

from other works, classical and contemporary, and including various genres such as the novel, drama, film, folk tales and historical legend.

Given such tremendous freedom in the disposal of time and space, it is not surprising to find that this play distances itself considerably from traditional attitudes. In it, artistry is regarded primarily as imaginative innovation, rather than as something in the service of conventional imitation or echoing. Being creative, the artistic work of the play is a channel for subjectivity, and turns reality into a vehicle for conscious authorial messages. Reality has its own rationales, but they are not necessarily identical with those of art. Materials from reality which are taken into art must be processed. When reality is not sufficient to convey subjective ideas, it is at the author's disposal to re-mould it or even warp or twist it in order to satisfy his or her subjective intentions. This being so, the avant-garde and the advocates of naturalism have common ground, since they both alter reality, differing only in the extent that they do so.

When the shape of reality is twisted, its connotations cannot remain the same, and it is with this reshaped matter that the author finds appropriate media for his or her subjective attitudes. If we in such cases still try to trace original meaning of the source materials and consider it as the artistic theme, we may be totally confused, and may feel that logic has been replaced by contradictions, order by chaos, and clarity by obscurity, as is the situation with many modernist works. In these circumstances, it is important to identify the author's semiotic context and symbolic system, in order to decipher his artistic codes.

Coincidentally or by their internal logic, both plays break through the ordinary logic in order to achieve their ideal character system. This system has no objective model in reality, that is to say, characters are brought together according to a special artistic logic, their counterparts in reality not actually ever having had any relationship to one another. As with *Golden Lotus*, the dislocation of time and space makes it impossible to understand the dramatic reality in the ordinary sense, and the audience can hardly identify the character's stage locales, this helping to create a feeling of the absurd.[54] On the other hand, however, the dramatist then endeavours to elucidate the stage locales, thus breaking the spell of absurdity which has been puzzling the audience,[55] and for this

[54] Albert Camus, who initiated such an existentialist conception of the absurd, says: "In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity." As quoted in Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of Absurd*, op. cit., p. 16.

[55] Amelia Howe Kritzer says: "Going from the version of history to a consideration of gender and change in contemporary relationships, Churchill abandoned the Brechtian terrain of the history plays, though not without taking from it some valuable freight, and set off in new directions prompted by her continuing impulse toward theatrical experimentation and expression of feminist insights into

purpose, a semiotic system of characters is established, thus shaping the onset of the opening scene.[56]

There are also two character-systems in *Top Girls*, one being of characters of real life, who live in the dimension of present times, the other of historical apparitions and artistic figures, who are in the dimension of the past. Like the situation in *Golden Lotus*, when these systems merge, a set of multi-dimensional co-ordinates is established. The characters borrowed from history and existing artistic works convene in a contemporary pub, where there is a waitress and a woman clerk who live in contemporary time. Thus different time dimensions are mixed. The characters include the following (in order of appearance):

1. The waitress of the pub. Her time is not specified, but is in fact the present time, in other words the time when the dramatic incidents are taking place. Similarly, the pub is the real space which serves as a locale for dramatic actions;

2. Marlene, a woman clerk. Her time is also vague, but it is obvious that she is supposed to live at a much later time than the unreal characters;

3. Isabella Bird (1831-1904), She historically lived in Edinburgh and travelled extensively between the ages of 40 and 70;

4. Lady Nijo (born in 1258), a Japanese courtesan in the imperial court;

5. Dulle Gret. The subject of the Brueghel painting entitled *Dulle Griet*, in which a woman in apron and armour leads a crowd of women charges through hell fighting the devils;

6. Pope Joan, who, disguised as a man, was made the Pope between 854-856;

7. Griselda, a girl in *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer.

This panel of characters is similar to the "characters outside the play" in *Golden Lotus*, but the difference is that these characters intrude much more deeply into the play, in both dramatic and thematic respects, as it will be discussed later. They are not "outside the play", but form a section of the dramatic plot.

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contemporary society. While originating structures and techniques, as well as combining those of diverse theatre periods and styles, Churchill remained close to the Brechtian spirit of **encouraging the audience to actively criticize institutions and ideologies they had previously taken for granted**, both in theatrical representation and in society itself." (Emboldenings mine.) See Amelia Howe Kritzer, "Sex and Gender", in her *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theatre of empowerment* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 111.

[56] This treatment has recourse to the subjective manipulation of time, which is here not local, and the same is true of the play as a whole. The rest of two acts are dislocated in their temporal order, the latter predating the former by a year. Although seeming simpler, the temporal treatment of the last two acts may be considered more complex than that in the first which "brings the present into connection with the past." See Geraldine Cousin, "Possibilities Realized and Denied", in her *Churchill: The playwright,* op. cit., p. 97.

In a similar way to what happens in *Golden Lotus*, when they are summoned and brought together and form an organic system, their collectivity manifests itself and a general concept is generated. On the realistic plane, they should not actually have any social relationship to one another, so what links them is the concept. Another point is that, being apparitions, they are not physically alive, and their vitality resides only in a philosophical realm, their characters being merely media to carry ideas.

This character system is pervaded by strong moods of femininity and feminist attitudes. As the playwright says, various women doing various jobs are introduced onto the stage, their coming together being due to a certain feminist concept. This artistic treatment shares with criticism the structuralistic induction for interpreting female literary images in general. It "places Marlene's success within a context of extraordinary achievements by women in the past, and raises expectations of a further celebration of the ways in which women have altered the course of their lives."[57] In this sense, all the characters live in an abstract conceptual world rather than a real society, and their contacts are actually the communing of feministic spirits.[58] There is no real conflict in the normal sense among them, because they do not have real social relationships. Admittedly, when they are having a party, they greet each other, converse and argue, but this is only a superficial and artificial relationship, being notionally far removed from the dramatic conflict. Each of these characters has her individual romantic story, which ends up either happily or miserably, but all of them suffer either the injustice of a patriarch or of unreasonable sexual morality in an explicit or hidden, mild or violent manner. Because of these shared characteristics of their stories and suffering, they become icons with similar symbolic meanings to each other, each of them standing as a model of a female victim's suffering in a relationship with a male, and each thus revealing a certain aspect of patriarchal injustice. Gathering together, they form a unity, in which they complement each other, parallel each other. They relate their romances separately and overlappingly, but never run counter to one another on either the dramatic or the conceptual level. This is how, as in the case of *Golden Lotus*, typifications are achieved, and a general survey of women's social problems over a huge span of time and space is accomplished.

This is very similar to *Golden Lotus*, in which, although the system of "characters outside the play" includes both sexes, female characters all the same make up the

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[57] Geraldine Cousin, "Possibilities Realized and Denied", ibid, p. 95.

[58] Identifying the conflict between "the capitalist-hierarchies" and the feminist demand of "empowerment", Kritzer says: "She shows, through the all-female cast and the incorporation of actual historical figures into the test, that women can compete, Churchill emphasizes, through the classic use of dramatic irony as something hidden to the characters within the play but apparent to the audience, that the price of winning such competitions is abandonment of the responsibilities and relationships control to the caring ethic." Amelia Howe Kritzer, "Labour and Capital", in her *The Plays of Craryl Churchill: Theatre of empowerment* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 141-2.

overwhelming majority and have by far the most important dramatic functions. Beside this similarity, there is another, residing in the fact that among the female "characters outside the play" of *Golden Lotus* there is neither dramatic conflict nor ideological conflict, they being but various embodiments of the same spiritual entity. Like those in *Top Girl*, they are not real characters in any genuine sense, and may provisionally be termed "sub-characters", being similar to those in Alfred Jarry's *Ubu roi*:

> The characters, "depersonalised" by masks and grotesque costumes or represented by life-size dressmaker's dummies ... lacked any of the psychological depth associated with serious drama. Their motivations are inconsistent, their inner natures openly expressed in the simplest terms -- so removing any suspicion that they might have a three-dimensional core of individuality.[59]

The abstract conceptual nature of such characters may be corroborated by the following observations. In *Top Girls*, the sub-character system only exists in the first act. Although Marlene survives until later on, most of them vanish like apparitions, by which time the system has been dismantled. These characters with all their actions, which make up one act, do not contribute very much to the plot, and Act One furthermore has only a very loose connection on the dramatic level to the ensuing acts. Act One goes through the romantic stories told by all of them and ends with a scene of merry-making in which they get drunk and laugh and joke. When the curtain rises again, the setting is that of an employment agency, and all the characters of the first act, except Marlene, have stepped off stage and never come back, and indeed there is not even a single reference to them thereafter. They are treated as historical apparitions in the literary sense, and by the final act, all are entirely forgotten. Act Two is actually the starting point of the plot proper, and the first act with its unreal sub-characters may be entirely missed out without any detriment to one's understanding of the plot.

This goes to show that the characters from other times and locations are active only in a spiritual respect, and, still kept distant from reality, are not accepted by the realistic and dramatically more vital panel of characters. Different in their co-ordinate systems, they stand side by side but do not truly coincide. In this respect the play differs from *Golden Lotus*.

As with the situation in *Golden Lotus*, although these characters engage in little lively dramatic action, they do contribute to the elucidation of the theme. Each of them connotes a certain amount of information with which they explain themselves and interpret the others, thus forming a semiotic structure, and each of them serves as a referent for the others. With regard to this, there arises the question of what defines their

[59] Christopher Innes, "Symbolism and Alfred Jarry", in his *Holy Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1981), pp. 20-1.

symbolic meaning. The answer rests in the non-theatrical sphere. In short, their symbolic connotations are not generated by the dramaturgy, but transferred and transformed from reality. That is to say, each character functions as an allusion to reality, their allusive meaning depending on the meaning of their prototype in reality. As apparitions, they are illusive onstage, but they allude to reality and still keep their basic identities. Both plays share this feature.

In *Golden Lotus* for example, the "characters outside the play" have a very stable personality which remains the same despite the development of the dramatic conflict, so that their symbolic meaning can remain static. For example, as a character from a film, Shasha has been a household name, the only reference to her being the original novel and film based on it. The same is true of Anna, the only reference to her being the novel, and the only context for her the publicly accepted understanding of the image of her created by Tolstoy. Similarly in *Top Girls*, the characterisations of most females in the first act are tied to their original sources. This indeed is one major reason why these characters are excluded from the active dramatic conflict, since their strong affinity to the their sources makes it more expedient to keep them at a distance from the actual dramatic action. They stand at the conjunction of the play and the source materials. They are illusive and allusive, "illusive" in the sense that they are not real dramatic characters but apparitions or symbols for ideas, and "allusive" in that they have symbolic functions that can be alluded to by a general knowledge of their basic characters.

Let us look further into these "non-dramatic" character systems in both plays. Each play, both for the same aim, goes out of its way to place the sub-characters on the stage. In *Golden Lotus*, the "characters outside the play" can also be called unreal characters, because like those in *Top Girls*, they essentially are not involved in the dramatic conflicts, so they lack true dramatic function. In contrast to *Top Girls*, however, they are not introduced once and for all in the first act, but gradually appear one by one and act by act, eventually forming a group of figures. This is a linear process. Unlike their counterparts in *Top Girls*, they are not short-lived, but last till the end of the play. In *Golden Lotus* they all remain exactly the same as when they first show their face, that is to say, there is no development of their character. Even Anna, who undergoes a violent dramatic change, committing suicide but recovering, remains stable in her character.

In *Top Girls*, the network of these unreal characters is created quickly. It lasts for the first act only then vanishes completely. The restaurant serves as the locale to which they are summoned, and Marlene functions technically as the centre to which all of them are attracted. This is distinct from *Golden Lotus*, which maintains them in lines running parallel to the plot.

Act One is a mixture of different time dimensions, these dimensions having tighter seams than those in *Golden Lotus*. The scene is as follows. The curtain is raised on a restaurant, where a table is set for dinner with six places. The waitress and Marlene are waiting for the ladies. Seconds later Isabella arrives, and a dialogue between her and Marlene begins. Minutes later Nijo arrives, and as she joins the conversation the centre of attention is shifted from Isabella to her. This pattern recurs similarly with all the later arrivals. Within the time of roughly one tenth of the whole act, the assembly is complete, except for Griselda, who comes in the second part of the act. This arrangement is in sharp contrast to that of *Golden Lotus*.

"Non-dramatic" characters in *Top Girl* form a tightly structured system which is relatively independent, and the characters communicate with one another in a much more realistic way than those in *Golden Lotus*. Over drinks, they relate the histories of their personal affairs separately and overlappingly, which suggests real life much more than the manner employed in *Golden Lotus*. The system itself expresses deep meaning, unlike *Golden Lotus* in which the "characters outside the play" are subordinate to the "characters within the play". In this play, even before the system takes final shape, characters have shown a deep potential to act dramatically, and as long as the system exists, they are never out of the play, while in *Golden Lotus*, the "characters outside the play" do not warrant independent action, and everything that they do is merely auxiliary and subsidiary, they from time to time being banished backstage and simply left out of the dramatic development. In *Top Girls* their actions are much more solid and interactions much more cohesive, while in *Golden Lotus*, the actions of the "characters outside the play" fragment and are only momentarily relevant, even though they can appear again. The characters in *Golden Lotus* are more amorphous, more active in the spiritual realm, and ever-ready to come any time to offer ideological or philosophical comments. They can contact "characters within the play" spiritually, but they lack the more tangible interactions that take place in *Top Girls*, and in a more evident sense they are spokeswomen for the author and commentators on the "characters within the play".

In *Golden Lotus*, historical distance and geographical separation are always made quite clearly distinct, and even when the two systems interact with each other and different kinds of characters physically communicate with one another, the hiatus is still obvious, as for instance, in Act Four:

> (. . . She rushes gladly into his arms. Lights become dim. The Chinese oboe is heard. Shi Naian reappears on the steps.)
>
> SHI NAIAN: That woman has committed adultery. Elder Wu, come quickly and catch the adulterous pair!
>
> THE ELDER WU: (Enter in great haste, looks around.) Who's calling me?

SHI NAIAN: Golden Lotus has committed adultery. Go and catch her and her lover!
THE ELDER WU: (Angrily and afraid.) I . . . how do I catch them?
SHI NAIAN: You still can't make up your mind? Follow me and my writing-brush will direct you. Let's go!
(Shi Naian points the way with his writing-brush. The Elder Wu goes into the room. Exit Shi Naian.)[60]

The physical contact between this ancient author and the character from his novel is a curious device of which the audience is fully conscious. The separation between them is clearly conceived because Shi Naian's appearance is a necessity resulting from the acts of "characters within the play", and he appears as an incarnation of an idea, remaining more an outsider than a real participant. It is not so much him acting as his pen speaking. The following are further examples:

GOLDEN LOTUS: (Covering her face with her sleeves) Who are you?
ANNA: (Sings an opera aria.)
I'm standing on the other side of the earth,
I'm standing in another period of history;
I'm dreaming a very absurd dream,
Time flows backward, and you and I cross each other's path.[61]

SHASHA: (Rushes on stage, calls out loudly.) Hold it!
THE ELDER WU: (Breathing his last, backstage.) Oh . . .
SHASHA: (Sings.)
My warning cannot penetrate the iron curtain of history.
I can only watch her, from a distance --
SHI NAIAN: (Appearing with a huge pen in his hand.) I'll conclude this episode and start another chapter. [62]

In the epilogue two groups of characters communicate with one another in ideas instead of action:

GOLDEN LOTUS: All right, kill me. Come, start from here!
. . . . . .
EMPRESS: (Call from backstage.) Stay the execution!
(Empress Wu, Precious Jade, Sesame Prefecture, and so forth crowd on the steps to the right of the stage. Empress Wu, the Rascals, the Bully and so forth crowd on the step to the left of the stage.)
EMPRESS WU: Her offence does not deserve death!
SQUIRE ZHANG: She deserves to die ten thousand times!
PRECIOUS JADE: The blame rests with the evil system !
. . . . . .

[60] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping,* op. cit., p. 39.
[61] Ibid., p. 43.
[62] Ibid., pp. 44-5.

WOMAN CHIEF JUSTICE: (Calls from backstage.) Cruel and uncustomary punishment is forbidden!

. . .

(The Younger Wu plunges his knife into her chest.) [63]

The division of functions here becomes apparent: one group is acting in the plot, another is thinking aloud outside the play; and from beginning to end, the distinction between reality and illusion, and between the dramatic and the didactic, is always drawn, separation and distance often being clearly stressed.

Top Girls follows another line. It tries to create an illusion which merges together reality and imagination, the present and the past, the natural and the supernatural, the realistic and the imaginative, and so on.

A technicality used to create the illusion is to compress past time and prolong present time, and bring them both into one close temporal sequence. For instance, the first act is set in realistic surroundings which strongly suggest the atmosphere of everyday life, the waitress and Marlene's initial predominance onstage setting the time from the start. After that, time slides secretly back to the nineteenth century when Isabella lived, to the Medieval times when Lady Nijo lived, to the Dark Ages of Pope Joan, and so forth. In this way, time is compressed to such an extent that the length between each epoch can be ignored, so that all of the epochs chosen are ranged into one condensed interactive sequence. In this way, different time dimensions appear to have merged into one another and converges into one dimension in the ordinary realistic co-ordinate set. In these, present time moves very slowly by comparison with past time, and in the process both kinds of characters are depicted in realistic detail.

Another means to create the illusion is to employ the special characters that are half real, such as the waitress and Marlene. Marlene, for example, on the one hand is a dramatic character and plays an important role in the rest of two acts, but on the other hand has the ability to transcend space and go back through time to meet all the women who have died long ago. What is more, after all other apparitions have vanished, she survives and lives till the end of the play, this being a clear indication of her importance in creating and maintaining the illusion, since they straddle both real and unreal dimensions.

This special kind of character reinforces the realistic atmosphere where it might otherwise be weak. Firstly, by standing abreast with Marlene, the apparitions share the vitality of real life and thus appear more realistic. Secondly, this special character bestrides both Act One and the ensuing acts, contributing in her person to the binding together of the everyday and the supernatural.

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[63] Ibid., pp. 45-6.

This kind of special character in *Top Girls* functions differently from its equivalents in *Golden Lotus*. The rascals in *Golden Lotus* actually stand between the two types of characterisation. They basically belong to the "characters outside the play", but they take actual and active part in the dramatic action of the characters within the play. For example, they bully the Elder Wu, abuse Golden Lotus and conspire with Ximen. Although they are mingled with the dramatic actions, they bear the sharper colour of modern times, and their appearance, behaviour, costumes, language and psychology contrast sharply to those of the "characters within the play". The special characters in *Top Girls*, however, have different functions. Although they often proclaim their modern time-association, their manner and conduct are very similar to those of the apparitions, and in fact they constitute a model for the apparitions to follow. Since the apparitions behave in tune with the modern model, they are brought into the present, and the split between past and present, and between art and reality, is smoothly seamed.

Yet another technique for creating illusion is the employment of narrative as opposed to dramatic techniques. When this is done, a mono-system of axes is required, and past events do not need three dimensions but occupy only one dimension, that of time, so that the present and past are united temporally. This gives the illusion of realistic actuality. In contrast, *Golden Lotus* dramatises events from different historical periods and different spaces into one dramatic locale, Anna's death and Golden Lotus' act of murder, for instance, being made nearly simultaneous, this kind of treatment removing the action further away from ordinary verisimilitude.

Top Girls makes its best use of narrative in Act One. Instead of employing dramatisations, each of the apparitions relates a story. Each of them tells her own particular romance, which is full of lively clashes, and these clashes are not only meaningful in the play, but dramatic in a supra-theatrical sense. Each of the tales is a complete and consistent unity, being more or less an independent story. The legend of Griselda is in fact taken from Chaucer, Bocaccio or Petrarch, so it is hardly surprising that it should have such independent literary and narrative value. For each tale, a line of active incidents with the necessary descriptive details can be filtered out from the accompanying and structurally irrelevant adulteries. Pope Joan's dialogue, for example, can be compacted into a sharp core story as follows:

> *I dressed as a boy when I left home.*[64]. . . It was easy, I was only twelve. And also women weren't / allowed in the library[65]. We wanted to study in Athens. . . . I went with my friend. He was sixteen, . . . but I thought I knew more science than he did and almost as much philosophy. . . . They noticed I was a very clever boy. / And when I shared a bed with my friend, that was ordinary -- two*

[64] The asterisk "*" is original which indicates where she interrupts others' dialogue.
[65] The stroke "/" is original which indicates where her dialogue is interrupted.

poor students in a lodging house. I think I forgot I was pretending. . . My friend died. Have we all got dead lovers? . . . I'd quarrelled with him over the teaching of John the Scot, who held that our ignorance of God is the same as his ignorance of himself. He only knows what he creates because he creates everything he knows but he himself is above being. . . . Well we disagreed about it, we quarrelled. And next day he was ill. I was so annoyed with him, all the time I was nursing him I kept going over the arguments in my mind. . . . But then I realized that he'd never understood my argument again, and that night he died. [Marlene: So what did you do?] First I decided to stay a man. I was used to it. And I wanted to devote myself to learning. Do you know why I went to Rome? Italian men didn't have beards. . . . There was nothing in my life except my studies. I was obsessed with the pursuit of truth. I taught at the Greek school in Rome, which St Augustine had made famous. I was poor, I worked hard. I spoke apparently brilliantly, I was still very young, I was a stranger; Suddenly I was quite famous, I was everyone's favourite. Huge crowd came to hear me. The day after they made me cardinal I felt ill and lay two weeks without speaking, full of terror and regret. / But then I got up . . . determined to go on. I was seized again with a desperate longing for the absolute. . . . Pope Leo died and I was chosen. All right then, I would be Pope. I would know God. I would know Pope. I had thought the Pope would know everything. . . I had thought the Pope would know everything, I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman. . . In the end I did take a lover again. . . . he could keep a secret. . . . Yes, I enjoyed being Pope. I consecrated bishops and let people kiss my feet. I received the King of England when he came to submit to the church. Unfortunately there were earthquakes, and some village reported it had rained blood, and in France there was a plague of giant grasshoppers, but I don't think that can have been my fault, do you? . . . Yes, if it hadn't been for a baby I expect I'd have lived to an old age like Theodora of Alexandria, who live as monk. She was accused by a girl / who fell in love with her of being the father of her child and -- [Nijo: But tell us what happened to your baby. Marlene: Did you think of getting rid of it?] Wouldn't that be a worse sin than having it? But a Pope with a child was about as bad as possible. [Nijo: You had to have it adopted secretly.] . . . But I didn't know what was happening. I thought I was getting fatter, but I was eating more and sitting about, the life of a Pope is quite luxurious. I don't think I had spoken to a woman since I was twelve. The chamberlain was the one who realized . . . I never knew what month it was. . . I didn't know of course that it was near the time. It was Rogation Day, there was always a procession. I was on the horse dressed in my robes and a cross was carried in front of me, and all the cardinals were following, and all the clergy of Rome, and a huge crowd of people. / We set off from St Peter's to go to St John's. I had felt a slight pain earlier, I thought it was something I'd eaten, and then it came back, and came back more often. I thought, when this is over I'll go to bed. There were still long gaps when I felt perfectly all right and I didn't want to attract attention to myself and spoil the ceremony. Then I suddenly realised what it must be. I had to last out till I could get home and hide. Then something changed, my breath started to catch, I couldn't plan things properly any more. We were in a little street that goes between St Clement's and the Colosseum, and I just had to get off the horse and sit down for a minute. Great waves of pressure were going through my body, I heard sounds like a cow bellowing, they came out of my mouth. Far away I heard people screaming, 'The Pope is ill, the Pope is dying.' And the baby slid just out onto the road. . . . One of the cardinals said, 'The Antichrist!' and fell over in a faint. . . .*[66]

In the course of such a lengthy narrative, an audience may easily sink into the milieu of the distant past, but at times, the play deliberately carries them back to present reality, with the consequence that the past no longer seems so distant, but indeed as close as were it yesterday.

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[66] Pp. 62-71 -- Quotations of this play are from *Top Girls*, in *Caryl Chirchill Plays: Two*, (London & New Hampshire: Methuen Drama, 1990).

When narrating the most touching part of their experience, the apparitions are interrupted by the waitress, and the audience is distracted from the past back to the present. The waitress enters every now and then, but with very little action and no dialogue at all, her function being to ring the bell of the present time and suggest the realistic locale in the modern world. This point in a similar way becomes clearer if the conversations are omitted, as in the following:

> (Restaurant. . . . Marlene and Waitress.) [67]
> . . .
> . . .
> (The Waitress brings menus.) [68]
> . . .
> . . .
> (The Waitress starts to bring the main course.) [69]
> . . .
> (The Waitress enters.) [70]
> . . .
> (Pause.)
> (The Waitress enters to clear the plates. They start talking quietly.) [71]
> . . .
> (The Waitress brings desert.) [72]
> . . .
> (The Waitress enters.) [73]
> . . .
> (Nijo cries. The Waitress brings brandies.) [74]
> . . .
> (The Waitress enters with coffees.) [75]

This is the manner in which the waitress acts throughout the whole act, and its function can be none other than to dispel any nostalgic aura and draw the stage firmly back into the present.

Marlene operates in the same way. She and the waitress alternately remind the audience of present time and realistic spatial location. Marlene's core contribution in this respect can be underlined in the same way:

> (Restaurant. . . . Marlene and the Waitress.) [76]

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[67] Ibid., p. 56.
[68] Ibid., p. 57.
[69] Ibid., p. 63.
[70] Ibid., p. 66.
[71] Ibid., p. 72.
[72] Ibid., p. 77.
[73] Ibid., p. 78.
[74] Ibid., p. 79.
[75] Ibid., p. 80.

. . .

. . .

Marlene. Come on, Nijo, have some wine. [77]

. . .

Marlene. Magnificent all of you. We need some more wine, please, two bottles I think, . . . I want to drink a toast to you all.

. . .

Isabella. To yourself surely,/ we're here to celebrate your success.
Nijo. Yes, Marlene.
Joan. Yes, what's it exactly.
Marlene. Well, it is not Pope but it is managing director.
Joan. And you find work for people.
Marlene. Yes, an employment agency. [78]

. . .

Marlene. I can't stand this. I'm going for a pee.
(Marlene goes out.) [79]

. . .

(Marlene comes back.)

. . .

Marlene. Oh God, I can't bear it. I want some coffee. Six coffees. Six brandies. Double brandies. Straightaway.[80]

In the examples above, their actions may seem nonsensical unless their job of indicating time and space is taken into consideration.

Besides the symbolic characters, there are also some symbolic incidents in the plays. For example, Golden Lotus's cooking of cakes symbolises the dull monotony of marital life without romantic affection, and the Elder Wu's doggerel is a stock as quoted in the lore of everyday life, serving by its very nature to symbolise a conservative outlook. In *Top Girls*, Pope Joan says: "Have we all got dead lovers?"[81] Yes, they have, and the dead lover is also symbolic of the necessity of tragedy in female romance.

Another symbolism is concerned with the "child", which symbolises the misery of motherhood. Admittedly "there is no necessary relation between love and children; but there is a necessary relation between love and creation" [82], and in this light, children are the issue of such interrelated matters as love, sex, marriage and family.[83] In *Top Girls*,

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[76] Ibid., p. 56.
[77] Ibid., p. 61.
[78] Ibid., pp. 68-9.
[79] Ibid., p. 77.
[80] Ibid., p. 78.
[81] Ibid., p. 64.
[82] A. R. Orage, *On Love* (London: The Unicorn Press, 1932), p. 14.
[83] Orage continues: "Love is for creation; and if creation is not possible, then for procreation; and if even that is not possible, then for creations of which, perhaps fortunately, we are unconscious. . . . Briefly, the aim of conscious love is to bring about re-birth, or spiritual childhood." See ibid., pp. 14-5.

the females from history and literary works have either had children who died, or they have been deprived of them, and in *Golden Lotus*, the heroine suffers in the same manner. In general, a child may bear various symbolic meanings according to the social context. It may be an emblem signifying the harmony of marriage, the termination of love,[84] or a sign for the enduring nature of patriarchal genealogy. As a consequence of procreation, it may suggest utilitarian profanity as opposed to Platonic love. Also, as an outcome of sex, it may elevate sexuality from mere mundanity into the religiously lofty and sacred. As Nietzsche says: "The act of procreation is the mystery as such in all nonascetic religions: a sort of symbol of perfection and of the mysterious design of the future: rebirth, immorality."[85] The implications are made clear in *Top Girls*, where the dead child symbolises the failure of love. In the story of Griselda, the child is abused as a trial and penalty for the wife, it being entirely at the male's disposal, because, although in a social sense it is assumed to be more closely bound to the female side than to the male, it is legally a chattel of the male, or, as Griselda puts it: "It was Walter's child to do what he liked with."[86] The incident occurs as follows:

> Griselda. . . . But he said he wouldn't snatch her, I had to agree and obey and give her up. So when I was feeding her a man came in and took her away. I thought he was going to kill her even before he was out of the room. . . I asked him to give her back so I could kiss her. And I asked him to bury her where no animals could dig her up. [87]

She had another child, this time a boy:

> Griselda. . . . I kept my son until he was two years old. A peasant's grandson. It made the people angry. Walter explained.
>
> Isabella. But surely he wouldn't kill his children, just because --
>
> Griselda. Oh it wasn't true. Walter would never give in to the people. He wanted to see if I loved him enough. [88]

Griselda's story particularly exposes patriarchal power over female and children alike, that is to say, how man not only dominates woman, but also possesses the offspring, and how the child in this situation is not common wealth produced by love, but private property owned by the male. The blood bond and affectionate relationship between child

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[84] See Jacques Derrida, "Sexual Difference in Philosophy", in Peggy Kamuf (ed.), *A Derrida Reader*, op. cit.

[85] "Book Two: Critique of Highest Values", 148 (1883-1886), in *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Walter Kaufmann (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), p. 94.

[86] *Top Girls*, op. cit., p. 77.

[87] Ibid., pp. 76-7.

[88] Ibid., p. 77.

and mother is endangered by the social institutions and customary conventions which arbitrarily assume that the genealogical line can be drawn through the male side only.

As for Joan, the Pope, she suffered more. She had a secret and guilty pregnancy and her child was delivered on the street. When she was stoned to death, her child was killed as well.

Lady Nijo's fate has been no better. Her first child was the Emperor's, which was dead at birth. The second was an illegitimate one by Akebono, but was supposed to be the Emperor's. After she became pregnant, she announced that she was seriously ill, and Akebono announced that he had gone on a religious retreat in order to pre-empt any scandal over it. Later he held her round the waist and lifted her up as the baby was being born. He cut the cord with a short sword, wrapped up the baby and took it away. She then told the Emperor that she had been mistaken in thinking that she was going to have a baby. The child, a daughter, was brought up by Akebono's wife, and Nijo saw her only once, when the little girl was two years old.

Marlene's experiences are not revealed in Act One, nor do we learn about them in the following acts. It is not until the final act that we are made aware of the misery that she has known. She was pregnant and later gave birth to a child, but difficulties prevented her from publicising the fact, so she disclaimed her child and her sister adopted it, Marlene thus losing her position as mother and becoming an aunt. In Act Two, her daughter, by now aged sixteen, is looking for a job and goes to Marlene's Employment Agency, but nothing is betrayed about their relationship. Not until the last act is the truth exposed. It is intriguingly novel that the time of Act Three, the final act, is one year before Act Two, and it is not a flashback, but "simply" a reversal of the time sequence. The purpose of this treatment is, having created an illusion, then to disabuse the audience of the illusion. Marlene has at first seemed a happy person. She has not "got [a] dead lover". When Joan says "Have we all got dead lovers?", Marlene answers: "Not me, sorry." She is, moreover, promoted to be the head of the Agency, so all the other women toast her success, and when they discuss the miseries of maternity, she appears to have luckily remained untouched by such misfortune. It is thus not until the end of the play are we totally disillusioned about her happiness, and just as in dreaming, we do not wake until the dream is over. Such a sad ending takes us back to the beginning of the play's story, and subtly but unmistakably proclaims the misery that is the burden of all mothers. In this way, maternity is made the constant underlying motif of the play.

In *Golden Lotus*, the issue of maternity is also firmly tackled in Act Two, where Golden Lotus sighs:

No inspiration, no love,

No romantic feeling, no child.[89]

Later when her husband mentions children, the following dialogue takes place:

> GOLDEN LOTUS. A child? (Pensively.) Can we, a couple like us, have any children?
>
> THE ELDER WU. Well . . . (smiling ingratiatingly.) Darling, Do not be upset, today I have bought a "happy treasure" -- (Slips out an object).
>
> THE ELDER WU. This wooden-headed baby is pale and fat, cheerfully smiling. It can be our child, to make its mum happy. . . .
>
> GOLDEN LOTUS. A wooden doll! [90]

The wooden doll makes an appearance again in Act Three, when Golden Lotus is asked about her pregnancy:

> GOLDEN LOTUS (Gets out the wooden doll). Take it and have a good look.
> THE YOUNGER WU. A wooden doll!
> GOLDEN LOTUS. That's it! (Sings.)
> *In the day I am with a dead wooden doll,*
> *Where's the fun in that?*
> *In the night I am with a live wooden man,*
> *How sad!* [91]

The wooden doll appears once more in Act Four, this time with a black beard. From beginning to end, it functions as a symbol for the absurd marriage and wooden feelings.

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Wei Minglun has proclaimed his affinity to "the theatre of the absurd". In his article entitled "I am dreaming a very absurd dream", he mentions the technical elements he uses that are identical to those of Ionesco, and his employment of such dramaturgical devices as magical realism and epic theatre. [92] All the same, his play still remains a very Chinese piece, far removed from the "absurdity" of the Western dramatic school, and in fact, for *Golden Lotus*, Western theatre of the absurd, and indeed even the various other Western schools, ideas and techniques such as magical realism, existentialism, and epic theatre, serve merely as inspiration and not as assimilative influences. Wei says: "As for absurdity, you have your tenor but I have my interpretation. Absurdity is not a patent of the West anywise."[93]

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[89] *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping*, op. cit., p. 20.
[90] Ibid., p. 23.
[91] Ibid., p. 41.
[92] See *Pan Jinlian: Juben he juping* (Peking: Shenghuo-Dushu-Xinzhi Sanlianshudian, 1986).
[93] Wei Minglun, "Wo zuozhe feichang 'huangdan'-de meng", in *Pan Jinlian*, op. cit., p. 79.

Concerning this, a tentative argument may be offered here. In the modern and modernist arts, the absurd has become an important aesthetic category and entered into the ranks of such traditional categories as the beautiful, the humorous, the sublime, the ridiculous. It provides a new angle to look at the relationship between human beings and their environment, and accordingly, gives birth in modern drama to the new grace of "defiance or scorn" recommended by Camus[94]. On the one hand, it distinguishes itself from the comical, the ridiculous and the humorous, and, on the other, stands far removed from the tragic of the beautiful and sublime. In this sense, the attitude of absurdity in *Golden Lotus* may serve as a sign of the attainment of modernity in Chinese dramaturgy.[95]

Allowing itself so much artistic liberty and subjectivity of attitude, this work has aims that run counter to the short tradition of social realism promoted by Communist authorities, and in its relative newness might tentatively be termed Chinese Modernism. It is worth noting that, as opposed to social realism, a politically prescribed artistic technique and creative philosophy, *Golden Lotus* retreats further back to the long tradition of classical Chinese dramaturgy, and recovers the energetic romantic spirit and abundant freedom in it. Some aspects of the play that appear Modernist and Westernised are actually just traditional Chinese aspects that during the past few decades have steadily faded from the Chinese collective memory. This phenomenon is analogous to what has occurred with naturalism: "We are so used to the concept of the stage as a faithful representation of the world that we tend to forget how recent a growth the naturalistic theatre really is". [96] For example, the deliberate manipulation of time and space, the extreme exaggeration, symbolism and so on are all commonplace in ancient Chinese theatre. As for the minor techniques, such as "changing face" (*bianlian*), which seems to derive from Western magical realism, and the chorus (*bangqiang*), which

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[94] Cf. Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd", in Oswald Hanfling (ed.), *Life and Meaning: A reader* (Basil Blackwell in association with The Open University, 1987), p. 58

[95] Golden Lotus' situation and personality is of the absurdity described by Thomas Nagel: "In ordinary life a situation is absurd when it includes a conspicuous discrepancy between pretension or aspiration and reality. . . . When a person finds himself in an absurd situation, he will usually attempt to change it, by modifying his aspirations, or by trying to bring reality into better accord with them, or by removing himself from the situation entirely." See "The Absurd", op. cit., p. 51. He adds: "On the other hand, it is possible to expend effort on an attempt to destroy the other component of the absurd -- abandoning one's earthly, individual, human life in order to identify as completely as possible with the universal viewpoint from which human life seems arbitrary and trivial. (This appears to be the ideal of certain Oriental religions.) . . . Still, if someone simply allowed his individual, animal nature to drift and respond to impulse, without making the pursuit of its needs a central conscious aim, then he might, at considerable dissociative cost, achieve a life that was less absurd than most. It would not be a meaningful life either, of course; . . . The final escape is suicide. . . ." Ibid., p. 58.

[96] Martin Esslin, *Brecht: a choice of evils* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), p. 107.

appears rather Brechtian and Greek, they are in fact original and time-hallowed characteristics of traditional Sichuan Drama.

The situation is similar in *Top Girls*. It communicates with Modernism in some way, but does not fall into any particular school. For instance, the first act mixes the chaotic grotesque on the phenomenal level with rationality designated by the semiotic system, the latter of which is an elucidation of the former. This differs from The Theatre of Absurdity which "has renounced arguing *about* the absurdity of the human condition; it merely *presents* it in being -- that is, in terms of concrete stage images."[97] Like *Golden Lotus*, the main traits of this play are largely due to the author's own temperament and inspirations, rather than to any extraneous influences.

It is still too early to draw any final conclusion as to the reasons why these two plays bear such close resemblances to each other, and there is not a single clue to show that any direct or indirect contact has been made between the authors. One is inclined to believe that the similarity is largely coincidental and fortuitous, but even so, there must be some general necessity behind the fortuity, if only we take into account the common principles of artistic creation and the dictates of historical developments, combined with the nature of the range of possible modern treatments of the immensely complicated issue of women's status in the past and their present movements towards greater emancipation.[98] Such a sensitive and vital theme requires extraordinary efforts, and effective methods must be especially designed to twist the conventional co-ordinate set into novel and striking new ones, and the adoption of techniques that employ the peculiar, the absurd and even the grotesque has perhaps a certain air of inevitability if audiences are to be shaken out of their prejudices and preconceptions that have been fostered through much of the age-old past.

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[97] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurdity*, op. cit., p. 18.

[98] Very recently in Taiwan there has appeared a play called *Golden Partner*, a short television comedy, which shares a similar treatment and character system with this play, and "let[s] imagination run wild. A Mexican bandit, a Chinese swordsman, a Green Beret, a ballet dancer and a zombie from the Ch'ing dynasty could all show up in the same skit." See "The New Stars of TV Comedy", in *Sinorama* (*Guanghua*), vol. 17, no. 4, April 1992, p. 103; and in Hong Kong appears a similar work entitled *Christ, Confucius, John Lennon of the Beatles*, by Sha Yexin, directed by Daniel S. P. Yang, produced in Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in 1991; see James R. Brandon (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 61. And also, in 1995, *Golden Lotus* was staged in Taiwan. This shows the same historical trends in operation on both sides of the Straits. And as early as the last century, Liang Qichao (1873-1929) wrote a play *New Rome* (*Xin Luoma*), which also brings together different characters, from different Western civilisations and eras, Voltaire, Dante, Shakespeare, etc., who even furthermore quote from the Chinese classics. Cf. W. Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), pp. 197-201, & 278; and *Zhongguo dabaikequanshu*: *Zhongguo wenxue*, op. cit., vol. 2, s.v. Liang Qichao, by Ji Zhenhuai, pp. 416-7.

Above all we should highlight an undoubted modern shift in the dramatic discussions of love both East and West. In both plays, the analysis of romantic love has become inextricably, and above all most patently and deliberately, bound up with the fundamental nature of institutionalised social relationships between man and woman. It is this deliberate and flaunted didacticism that, justified or not, constitutes a major contrast to past theatrical attitudes towards, and treatments of, love.

CHAPTER V: Universal Love

Part One. Nature, Social Nature, and Human Nature

Attention may now be turned to the task of affirming that the finest and most valid romantic emotion is of a continuum with all the rest of fine human affection of whatsoever kind. Chapter One has recounted the aberrant situation of the Cultural Revolution when love and humanity were negated at the same time and for the same reason. In Chapter Two, we discussed intersexual love interpreted and transformed into its ultimate in certain directions, as love in general or the love of the deity. In Chapter Three, even though the love is once again that between sexes, it manages to extricate itself from the limitations of mere sex and to approach the absolute and universal. And immediately above, in Chapter Four, we have seen how maternal and sisterly affection and other benevolent feelings can be treated as intimately interconnected with romantic love.

What here is termed "universal love" refers to the general emotion, not simply that which is confined to the inter-sexual sense. The term is used to designate the warm spontaneously natural and also the reasoned social feelings shared by mankind, including maternal and paternal affections based on blood ties, natural benevolence, philanthropic inclination, and other emotions of warm goodwill towards other humans.

It has been a long and strong tradition, particularly in China, to treat fraternal love and sexual love as parallel, partly because love in the latter sense plays such a vital role that it needs to be highlighted and further stressed by demonstrating how the former is its counterpart. In fact, love in the sexual sense is only a special sub-category, although the most salient one, of human affections in general, but it does, however, have the capacity to reflect the general feeling of love and its ramifications. That is why love in the sexual sense is often either viewed as allied to general humaneness or universal love, or regarded as the sublimation or representative of the latter.

Between humaneness and sexual affection there is a covert organic connection, which is why romantic love cannot fully be comprehended without reference to universal love. In this regard, one of the major reasons why some works on love and sexuality read as frivolous is that they have overlooked this hidden inter-involvement and therefore

failed to put the love that is sexual affection into the broad context of humane and fraternal affection.

Once one is aware of this, it enables one to throw light on various other complicated issues, a conspicuous one of which is why love in both sexual and fraternal senses was, more than twenty years ago during the Cultural Revolution, utterly condemned as part of everyday life and eliminated from literature and the arts. The Introduction has mentioned how romantic love was completely ruled out then, but that was not all. Love as a general fraternal feeling was rejected together with romantic love, and was, moreover, deliberately misinterpreted to the utmost in order to fit in with the then current political ideology.

Sexual love as a private and personal emotion was rudely interfered with by ruthless authorities simply because of the interwoven relationship between personal romance and collective humaneness. The political theory of "class struggle" promoted by the ultra-radical authorities was by nature antagonistic to the notions of fraternity and universal love, which was why love in both senses was negated. That theory held that there was no love in whatever sense that was not class-related, that love must be conditioned by social particularities and class interests, and that the working class and the exploiting class did not share the same feelings, therefore they could not share mutual affection in any sense. According to this line of logic, universal love was a misconception, an abstract hypothesis which could never be realised in real life. The term "the bourgeois theory on human nature (*zichanjieji renxing lun*)" was coined to summarise all beliefs in humanitarianism, and "human nature" was repudiated as a false concept and deceptive idea which disintegrated the revolutionary will of class struggle. What was promoted instead was class feeling which could unite the people with proletarian brotherhood to fight against oppression and exploitation.[1] In this respect, *Red Lantern* also serves as a typical example. The constitution of the family in it is based solely on class relationship, having nothing to do with either blood bond, marital tie, sexual attraction or any spontaneous benevolence. The "broad expression of human emotion"[2] is viewed in it as untenable theory, and it is considered that what determines

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[1] Rejecting the theory of "literature and art of the whole people", Li Fan says by the end of 1966: "Chou Yang [Zhou Yang] changed class literature and art into that of 'common nature.' He openly disseminated similar trash such as, 'Works of art are acceptable to all classes, . . .' Since proletarian ideas and feelings are basically antagonist to those of the bourgeoisie, proletarian works definitely cannot move the bourgeoisie or evoke an echo in it, any more than bourgeois works can move the proletarian and evoke an echo in it. . . . As Lu Hsun so truly said, '. . . the victims of a famine never plant orchids like wealthy old gentlemen; and Chiao Ta in the Chia Mansion has no love for Lin Tai-yu.'" See Li Fan, "On Chou Yang's Theory of a 'Literature and Art of the Whole People' ", *Chinese Literature*, no. 12, 1966 (Peking: Foreign Language Press), pp. 113-4.

[2] See Ken Chien, "Critique of the Film 'Naturally There Will Be Successors' ", *Chinese Literature*, no. 7, 1973, (Peking: Foreign Language Press), pp. 85-6.

social relationships is politics alone, which after all intensively defines social relationship in terms of economy.

One realises now that not only was love negated, but also all kinds of humane feelings.[3] The difference between the two is that the negation of romantic love can easily be observed, in view of its conspicuous position in human life, while the rejection of the other humane feelings is less obvious. In view of this, what happened during the Cultural Revolution was not a lunatic impulse, but a clever strategy thought out with sobriety, deliberation, and a high degree of logicality about it. Because, as mentioned, romantic love is a sub-category of humane affection in general, and often configures the latter, it essentially repels political ruthlessness. Love, moreover, possesses mysterious powers and creates apparent miracles of conciliation, and so it has the potential to take the spirit out of artificial class struggles, dissolve politically instigated hostility between the so-called opposing classes, and emotionally take hold of the general populace, easily causing it to forget or ignore far-fetched political preachings.

Drama and the other literary and entertainment genres of the Cultural Revolution period slavishly served this political task, and attempted to create a second reality, one of falsehood and fabrication, in order to replace the reality that people really experienced. This second reality was an illusion, for it excluded one of the most vital perspectives of human life -- love. A striking feature of the works of that time is their obvious artificiality, and the great amount of artifice that sought to obscure it, since characters in works and performances were de-sexualised and the truth of life thereby castrated. In such circumstances, romantic love and the other humane feelings which might be suggested by love were all sequestered from audience and readers alike.

The significance of studying universal love appears evident once the foregoing arguments are taken into consideration. It is generally said that love is the sublimation or the highest form of human nature, and this remark strikes home as true, although the manner of its expression is rhetorically loose and subject to criticism for its sweeping generalisation. This is why I have chosen to compare Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and two Chinese plays of the Yuan dynasty, *Chalk Circle* by Li Xingdao (13th-14th century AD) and *Dream of the Butterflies* by Guan Hanqing (c. 1220-c. 1300) and attempt to identify any contrasts or communion between them with respect to universal love and other forms of humane feeling, at the same time pointing out the influence from Chinese theatre and culture on Brecht, whether direct or hidden, of spirit or substance.

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[3] John Bayley says: "Nothing else that unites human beings so emphatically declares at the same time the plurality of living; love may sometimes give us a marvellous degree of mutual consciousness but it also reinforces our most intractable solipsism." See his *The Characters of Love: A study in the literature of personality* (London: Constable, 1960), p. 5.

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Looking first of all at the literary motif of Li Xingdao's *Chalk Circle* and its development, we find that its story bears a strong resemblance to the Judgement of Solomon, lauding a mixture of wisdom in judgement on the one hand and motherhood as a natural feeling on the other. The scene concerning the drawing of "the chalk circle" is so brief as to take up a very small proportion of the overall plot, but is crucial in providing a seemingly wise solution and effectively propels the plot towards a perfect ending. A chalk circle is drawn on the floor of a law court and a child is put into the circle. Two women each of whom claims to be the natural mother of the child and demands custody, are ordered by the judge to try and pull the child out of the circle at the same time in order to prove their identity by the very zeal and energy of their pulling, it being at that point assumed that physical victory would be proof of greater love and thus of true motherhood. This contest is repeated. Nevertheless, each time Crabapple Bloom (Haitang), the real mother, fails to win the contest, as she would rather give up the child than hurt him by the violence of pulling him out by the arm. Discovering her motives, the judge in his wisdom deems Crabapple Bloom to be the child's true proven mother, and she is granted the custody of her child.

Although the story of "the chalk circle" resembles the Judgement of Solomon very closely in its essentials, it is less well known in China than the latter in the West. One possible reason for this is that *Chalk Circle* was written by Li Xingdao during the early golden age of Chinese drama, so that it easily became obscured and eclipsed by many other brilliant works, while Solomon's Judgement became a household word in Christian and Jewish countries, growing its deep roots in the soil of folklore. Fascinatingly from the point of view of cultural interchange, the Chinese story found its way to Europe as early as the eighteenth century via translations.[4]

In another development, on 20 October 1925 a play in five acts with the same title, *Chalk Circle,* by Klabund, a pen-name of Alfred Henschke, whom Brecht knew personally, was staged by Max Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater (in Berlin), where Brecht had just spent a year as a junior dramaturge. The text was published in the same year. This work bears clear marks of strong influence from the Chinese original. It has a Chinese setting, its heroine keeps the same name as its Chinese counterpart, Haitang (Crabapple Bloom), and the solution to its conflict is similar as well. In Act Five, the

[4] Cf. Phyllis Hartnoll: "The German dramatist Klabund translated *The Chalk Circle*, which has been seen also in English". See her *A Concise History of the Theatre* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), p. 239.

emperor tries to solve the child-possession riddle in person. He has a circle drawn on the ground before his throne and the boy in question placed in the circle:

> Emperor. *And now, both you women,*
> *Try to draw the boy out of the circle.*
> *At the same time.*
> *One of you take his left arm,*
> *The other his right. It is certain*
> *The right mother will have the right strength*
> *To draw the boy out of the circle to herself.*
>
> (The women do as he says. Haitang grips the boy gently; Mrs Ma tugs him brutally to her side.)
>
> It is clear that this person (indicating Haitang) cannot be the mother. Otherwise she would have managed to draw the boy out of the circle. Let the women repeat the experiment. (Mrs Ma once again pulls the boy to her side.) Haitang, I see that you do not make the slightest effort to draw the boy out of the circle to you. What's the meaning of that?[5]

Haitang replies: "If the only way I can get my child is by pulling off his arms, then let somebody who has never known a mother's suffering for her child pull him out of the circle", whereupon the emperor delivers his verdict: "Behold the mighty power locked in the chalk circle! This woman aimed to get control of all Mr Ma's fortune and to that end seized the child. Now that the real mother has been acknowledged it will be possible to find the real murderer . . ."[6]

Inspired by this play, Brecht produced a variation on this motif in his drama entitled *The Elephant Calf* (1926)[7], in which Jackie Pall pulls his mother out of a circle in order to prove contrariwise that he is her son. Friedrich Wolf was inspired by this to produce a play with a similar motif called *Tai-yang Erwacht*, the original title being *Haitang Wakes Up*. Not until twelve years later did Brecht resume this motif and begin to outline a play with the title of *The Odense Chalk Circle*. It is revealed by the extant fragments of the scheme for this work that it was fairly close in outline to the version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* now under discussion. In 1940, Brecht repeated the same motif by writing a story, *The Augusburg Chalk Circle*, which went even further in the direction of his *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and three or four years later when Brecht was assigned to write for Broadway, the framework for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was ready in his mind, the first version eventually being completed a few years later[8].

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[5] As quoted in "Editorial Note to The Caucasian Chalk Circle", in *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim, vol. 7 (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1977), p. 309.

[6] Ibid.

[7] In Willett & Manheim, *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays*, op. cit., vol. 2.

[8] The date of the writing and publication of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is left vague in some materials. It is specified as 1945 in Felica Hardison Londré, *The History of World Theater: From the*

From the above it can be seen that "the chalk circle", either as a Chinese dramatic work or as an exotic story used and adapted in the West, has drawn considerable attention from the West, particularly in German literature, and in the latter case it has been imbued with Western understandings and feelings. At the same time, it has been largely ignored in the Chinese literary world where it originated. Owing to various reasons stated above, the play did not have an outstanding impact in China either in the era of its composition or in later ages. It is hard to ascertain why it was chosen by the Europeans, but a simple fact is that it continues to exercise more influence on the West than on contemporary China. Such overseas influence in turn reminds Chinese of the existence of China's own *Chalk Circle* drama and its variants. Largely through its reputation in the West, the play is becoming better known in China. It might, for example, easily be overlooked by Chinese experts on Chinese drama, but cannot but attract great attention from Chinese scholars of Brechtian theatre. It would not be wrong to say that, in many ways, it has been brought into the general Chinese field of vision through the introduction of Brecht into China.

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The subject matter for both Brecht's play and its Chinese counterpart falls into two categories, domestic affairs and legal judgement, both of which are linked by the civil dispute over the child. Although both works involve a legal case and resort to a court trial as a solution to the dramatic conflict, neither of them take any real interest in legal affairs in any technical sense. The Chinese play, *Chalk Circle* might be classified as "court case drama" (*gong'an xi*), of which the judge, the otherwise famous Judge Bao, the protagonist or a leading figure in a huge series of such court-case plays and tales through the ages, is an obvious sign; but in terms of its contents, it is closer to the drama of urban customs, a clear visual sign for which is that the dramatic conflict takes place mainly inside the mansion of Squire Ma and between his two wives. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is far from being a detective drama. Like the Chinese play, it gives marked prominence to characters rather than to the plot. As for its plot, it appeals through its highly allegorical meaning and moral revelations, rather than by any detective nature or deductive quality.

English Restoration to the present (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1991, p. 434. But according to James K. Lyon, Brecht completed the fifth act (the last act unless one takes the Prologue into account) on June 5, 1944, and then it was adapted into English as an American edition scheduled to be published in 1947. Nevertheless, it "never reached Broadway during Brecht's American years, . . . New York theatergoers meanwhile would wait more than two decades to see the one play performed which he had written especially for Broadway." James K. Lyon, *Brecht and the American Theater* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 129 & 131.

Set in a different country, Russia, with characters in different, non-Chinese costumes, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* bears evident resemblance to the Chinese play, which in fact performs the function of a matrix for the allegorical meaning, subtly designed conflict and wise denouement of Brecht's play, and for the coincidence of characters in both plays and so forth.[9] On the other hand, however, Brecht breathes the air of his times and his personality into this old story, turning its metaphorical allegory into a philosophical analysis.

The conflict in the Chinese *Chalk Circle* is about the dispute of motherhood in the biological sense and the ownership of the child in both natural and social senses, which, on the plane of ideas, discloses the antagonism between the motherly feeling that is human nature and the ruthlessness and callousness of anti-humanitarianism. The story is related with fairly simple and effective dramaturgy: Crabapple Bloom, a singing girl, loves Mr Ma, a rather rich squire, and is married to him as his secondary wife. Their marital life is happy and harmonious. As in the blink of an eye, several years elapse and their child is now five years old. Unfortunately, their happiness has made the first wife very jealous, so their tranquillity is broken by her machinations. Crabapple Bloom's brother Zhang Lin comes to her for financial help, and goes away with some of Crabapple Bloom's jewellery and clothing. Then the malicious first wife calumniates her by telling their joint husband that Crabapple Bloom has given those things to her lover, and Ma consequently flies into a rage which gives him a heart attack. At this juncture, the first wife tells Crabapple Bloom to cook soup for him, but when the soup is ready and brought over by Crabapple Bloom, complains of its insipid taste and asks her to fetch some sauce. When Crabapple Bloom goes for the sauce, the first wife puts poison into the soup and thus murders Squire Ma. Afterwards, the first wife in collaboration with her adulterous lover lodges a false accusation with the authorities that Crabapple Bloom has committed a murder. Crabapple Bloom is then arrested and sentenced to capital punishment. At the same time, the first wife claims that the child is hers, this leading to "the chalk circle" incident as an attempt to prove the real mother. At the court of Kaifeng, the capital city, Judge Bao has the child put into the circle and orders the two

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[9] Azdac, the eccentric judge, bears strong affinity to Judge Bao. Both Azdac and Judge Bao are essentially of "the Chalk Circle", and are inseparably associated with the motif. However, since the origin of Azdac seems difficult to identify, scholars have ascribed his image to other parallel threads which are "of course the old Chinese story of the chalk circle, . . . and the story of the eccentric, paradoxical judge which (though one can never be certain of this) Brecht appears to have devised for himself." See "Editorial Note", in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim, vol. 7 (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1977), p. 308.

To my knowledge, another possible source this image derives from is *Don Quixote* by M. Cervantes, in which the character Sancho Panza (who is once made the governor of an isle) might have acted as a model for Azdac.

women to try and pull him out, declaring that the winner will be deemed the real mother. Each time, however, Crabapple Bloom, the true mother, fails in the attempt, and in desperation, she reveals her reason for failure, this being that, out of her deep love for her child, she would rather give him up than hurt him by pulling him too hard. Judge Bao then proclaims her the true mother.

By means of "the chalk circle", real motherhood is identified and motherly love tested. Such motherly love is primarily and largely due to genetic and biological factors, but is in general strongly boosted by social and moralistic influences. Put in another way, natural motherhood is in accordance with fundamental humanity and humaneness. A strong sense of morality is perceived in this play, and such morality is so simple and general that it does not distinguish between such basic categories as the natural and the social, the blood bond and the interpersonal relationship. This remark is by no means intended as critical of the play, since the playwright was under no obligation to consider such distinctions, which are of a philosophical kind more suited to the reflections of modern readers. In a certain sense, it is precisely in this point that the latent philosophical power of classical Chinese drama lies. In many cases, that drama assumed a uniformity which contains, but does not directly or explicitly convey, an abundance of messages which are logically consistent with each other.[10] It bears implications and is also of clarity, and its kind of "classic simplicity . . . defies simple interpretation"[11] This description is particularly true of *Chalk Circle*, in which Nature, human nature and social feeling are combined in the image of the heroine. She is the mother in the biological sense, but her natural motherhood must have been greatly developed through her experiences of rearing the child, so that her natural motherhood has actually been coloured by society. The natural aspect and social aspect are in such affinity that they are barely distinguished, and the mixture may therefore be termed *human nature*. Strictly speaking, such a term is self-contradictory or at least confusing on the linguistic level, because "hu-Man" and Nature are philosophically opposed concepts, but the separation of human nature and Nature serves useful provisional analytical and didactic purposes. In addition to Nature and human nature there are the social attitudes towards such matters as morality and justice to be taken into account. Crabapple Bloom's particular form of motherly love as seen in the context of this drama is a widely held concept, which unifies the three elements Nature, human nature and social outlooks, or, *social nature*. Clearly, such a unity is also an entity of all kinds of human feelings.

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[10] I can by no means agree with the following remark: "The mythical material with which Brecht is working in this play [*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*] is a **naïve and primitive** tale". See Charles R, Lyons, *Bertolt Brecht: The despair and the polemic* (London and Amsterdam: Southern Illinois University Press, Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1968), p.141. Emboldenings mine.

[11] Jan Needle & Peter Thomson, *Brecht* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 204.

A particular type of love, motherly love, like romantic and other types of love, is in harmony with humanitarianism. Humanitarianism as an abstract ethical force is a prerequisite to and a background for various other, particular types of love. This accounts for why in the Cultural Revolution, when humanitarianism was condemned, the other types of love were also correspondingly recriminated. Romantic affection between the sexes, blood bonds and the spontaneous feelings of fraternity were picked out for condemnation as "the reactionary bourgeois theory on human nature (*zichan jieji fandong renxinglun*)", and also officially considered to be the remains of medieval consanguine attachments and of the feudal code of personal loyalty.[12] What were then advocated in their stead were the so-called "class friendship and love (*jieji youai*)", which not only meant loving only members of the same social class as one, in effect the proletarian class, but equally or more importantly, it meant to hate the members of the other and supposedly opposed classes. In this way, love as tender feeling was by clever trickery turned into hatred, which served the hard totalitarian politics of the time. In such circumstances, heart is, so to speak, replaced by mind, the spontaneous heart by the indoctrinated mind. This mind was allowed to act as if thinking, though not of course to think for itself, but the heart was never allowed to feel.

If *Chalk Circle* had been accessible to the public during the Cultural Revolution, it would undoubtedly have been a mighty challenge to such a hard political doctrine, and heart and feeling would have been able to refer to it in an attempt to recover their position and claims. If everyone had been as benevolent as Crabapple Bloom, the malevolent political campaign would have lost its social foundation. From this point of view, it was clever of the authorities to have isolated the Chinese people from the Chinese dramatic and cultural heritage, thus preventing them from being influenced by the humanitarianism of the Chinese tradition. Not craziness, but cool and callous calculation dictated this course of political action, a nihilism in the service of a complicated political aim.

Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is a variation on the theme, and complicates the issues of motherhood by presenting a social or abstractly moralistic definition as opposed to a partly biological one. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* retains the thematic thread of "the chalk circle", which constitutes in his play a subtle artistic treatment of the

[12] It was not uncommon that, during the time from 1949 up to the end of the Cultural Revolution, tragic political rift took place between kinfolk, for a typical example, parents or grandparents were accused by their offspring of their political reactionary or counter-revolutionary behaviours and thoughts. Such things even became highly fashionable twice, once in the period when the P. R. China was founded, and again in the times of the Cultural Revolutions. To advocate such, the authorities distorted and capitalised on a traditional Chinese doctrine: "Great righteousness destroys kinship (*dayi mieqin*)".

dramatic conflict, while also inheriting the Chinese humanitarian spirit in regard to thematic content. In the former respect, Brecht gives the story a very different setting and greatly alters it, inserting into its framework different characters with new identities and new names. As for the latter respect, he has developed the humanitarian theme and provides a radically different interpretation of motherly love. A major contribution made by Brecht is to distinguish analytically the opposed elements mingled in the nature of motherhood: the natural and the social. To do this, his play designs a new system of characters, which again puts the child between two mothers, one being the Governor's wife, the real mother in the biological sense, and the other being Grusha, his mother in the social sense, who is a kitchen-maid and who saved and reared him.

The conflicts take place at the start of a rebellion, when the authority of the Governor is overthrown. While the Governor has lost both his power and life, his wife is in such a hurry to escape with her jewellery that her child, Michael, is overlooked and effectively abandoned. With an opposite attitude, Grusha picks up the child that has been left in the lurch:

> The Nurse. (Entering through the gateway with her mistress's slippers) Madam!
> A Fat Woman. She's gone.
> The Nurse. And the child. (She rushes to the child, and picks it up). They left it behind, those brutes! (She hands the child to Grusha.) Hold it for a moment. (Deceitfully.) I'm going to look for the carriage.
> . . .
> The Third Woman. . . . (Seeing the child in Grusha's arms.) The child, what are you doing with it?
> Grusha. It has been left behind.
> The Third Woman. She just left it? Michael, who was never allowed to be in a draught![13]

This scene creates a conflict which impels the plot forward, and also initiates the thematic conflict. At this point, the Governor's wife, the genetic mother, is losing her status as mother, because she fails to fulfil the minimum obligation demanded by Nature, human nature and motherhood as a social responsibility and moral requirement. Although she used to look after him well, and as the Third Woman says: he "was never allowed to be in a draught", her past efforts for the child, however, are made to seem ironic by the pathetic way in which the child has now after all been discarded. The deeds of this crucial moment act as a test for the authenticity of motherhood, and point out the hypocrisy of her kind of motherhood.

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[13] All the quotations of this play are from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, translated by James and Tania Stern with W. H. Auden, in *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim, vol. 7 (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1977).

In sharp contrast to the eventual climax of the Chinese play when the two women struggle for one child, the conflict is kindled at the point when both women try to disown the child and denounce their motherhood. In actual fact, the Governor's wife has never wanted to lose her son, but in practice she has given up her motherhood since she left Michael in the lurch, this action being opposed to the principles of human nature. In contrast to her, Grusha, although she has looked after the abandoned child, has no intention of taking on the formal responsibility of being its mother, but, on the contrary, has been eager to detach herself from the temporary status of motherhood since the moment she became involved in it. Her initial motivation is to look after the child for a while until his mother comes, and such benignity is due to general humanitarian feeling rather than to any particular motherly love. This point is dramatised in the following:

> (The servants gather around the child.)
> Grusha. He's waking up.
> The Stableman. Better put him down, I tell you. I'd rather not think what'd happened to the person seen with that child. I'll get our things. You wait here. (Exit into the palace.)
> The Cook. He's right. Once they begin, they'll slaughter whole families. I'll go and fetch my belongings.
> (All go except the cook, the third woman and Grusha with the child in her arms.)
> The Third Woman. Didn't you hear? Better put him down!
> Grusha. The nurse asked me to hold him for a moment.
> The Cook. That one won't come back, you silly![14]

As a matter of fact, Grusha considers the child to be a burden just as the others have done, quite a few minor characters having joined in the argument and all agreeing that the child should be left alone, and she is clearly aware of the conflict between her own well-being and his, as we see in the following:

> The Cook. . . . Grusha, you are a good soul, but you know you are not bright. I tell you, if he had the plague it couldn't be worse. Better see to it that you get away.
> (The stableman has come back carrying bundles which he distributes among the women. All except Grusha prepare to leave.)
> Grusha (stubbornly). He hasn't got the plague. He looks at you like a human being.[15]

The subtext for this dialogue is Grusha's view that the little boy should be treated as a human being in a humanitarian way. Her spontaneous benevolence, which notionally leads to humanitarianism of the theoretical form, is the foundation of the heroine's personality and accounts for her consistency and tenacity in linking her fate with the little

[14] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 162-3.
[15] Ibid., p. 163.

child's. It is from this humanitarianism or humaneness that her motherly love later on derives, and this philosophical reflection reveals the necessity underlying the subsequent development of the plot.

This inner struggle of Grusha's is frequently emphasised hereafter by the Singer who acts as an interlocutor and offers didactic commentaries on the author's behalf. For instance, towards the end of Scene Two, the Singer highlights her quandary, by explaining how on the one hand she wants to disengage herself from involvement with the child, and on the other, she is bound as if magnetically to him. On the one hand she is reluctant but feels obliged to pick the child up, and on the other does so by her own free will and choice. His song goes:

> *She went back to the child*
> *Just for one more look, just to sit with it*
> *For a moment or two till someone should come*
> *Its mother, perhaps, or someone else --*
> . . .
> *Just for moment before she left, for now the danger was too great*
> *The city full of flame and grief.*[16]

This reveals her psychological development, from wanting simply another look to staying with the child until it is safe, and the outcome is shown by her acting as stated in the following stage direction:

> (The light grows dimmer as though evening and night were falling, Grusha has gone into the palace and fetched a lamp and some milk, which she gives the child to drink.)
> . . .
> (Grusha now settles down to keep watch over the child through the night. Once, she lights a small lamp to look at it. Once, she tucks it in with a brocade coat. Now and again she listens and looks up to see if someone is coming.)[17]

The Singer adds the comment, "Terrible is the temptation to do good!", which stresses her psychological conflict. She is being forced against her will to link her fate with the little boy's by the general situation, while faced with such a circumstance as his plight, she is also willing to be tempted to help him. She eventually makes up her mind and takes the crucial step along the road which will eventually lead her to motherhood, as described by the Singer:

> *Like booty she took it for herself*
> *Like a thief she sneaked away.*[18]

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[16] Ibid., p. 164.
[17] Ibid., p. 165.

So far she has only been faced with the temptation to do good, but not with the need to become a mother. In the scene that follows this, Grusha preserves the same ambivalence, and there remains the same conflict between her own well-being and the child's survival. In this scene, Scene Three, such antagonism becomes acute.

Her psychological conflict between altruism and egoism lasts a long time. When she first picks the child, she hopes that someone may soon come for him. After she rescues him from danger, she hopes to be rid of him, and actually leaves the child with a farmer's family without any attempt at secrecy.

This presents a stage at which natural motherhood is dwindling in the biological mother's personal makeup, while it has not yet sprouted in the new substitute mother. But her motherly love is now about to grow forth from her universal love.

The conflict between altruism and egoism is further sharpened. Grusha buys milk for Michael at a high price. When she shares a room in an inn with other people, it is demanded that she pay for the child as well. When she has taken the child to a mountain area far from the city, she is too eager to return to her lover to want to look after the child any longer, and even goes so far as to leave the little boy-child at the door of a farmer's house, hoping the farmer will take him in and she be relieved of the involvement.

She is clearly aware of the conflict of interests between her and him, and she says: "I must turn back, because my sweetheart the soldier might soon return, and suppose he didn't find me? You can't ask that of me, Michael." Nevertheless, ruthless reality forces her back to her original position of taking care of the child. Shortly after leaving the farmer's house, she bumps into two soldiers of the Ironshirts who are searching for the child. They ask her about Michael, and panic-stricken, she suddenly runs away back into the farmer's house where the old couple, the farmer and his wife, have picked the child up, and tells them to hide it. Her fate is finally joined to the child's by a clash that occurs when the Ironshirts go to the old couple and discover the identity of the child, Grusha knocks one of the soldiers over and runs away with the child. Chased by the soldiers, she reaches a glacier over which there is a rotten wooden bridge, under which is the two thousand feet deep precipice. People try hard to dissuade her, but at this crucial point, she risks her life and crosses the glacier by the suspension bridge, some ropes of which have been broken, and leave the soldiers stranded over the other side.

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[18] Ibid., p. 165.

At this turning point, her motherly love commences.[19] By now, their lives have been forced together and their fates bonded one. That this is so is revealed by the dramatic action and also highlighted by philosophical comments. For example, when she is advised to cross the river without the child the following episode takes place:

> The Merchant Woman. Perhaps she's really got to go. Give it to me. I'll hide it and you cross the bridge alone.
>
> Grusha. I won't. We belong together. (To the child.) Live together, die together. (She sings.)
>
> *If the gulf is deep*
> *And the rotten bridge sways*
> *It is not for us, son*
> *To choose our ways.*
>
> *The way that I know*
> *Is the one that's for your feet*
> *The bread that I find*
> *Is all you will eat.*
>
> *Of every four morsels*
> *You shall have three.*
> *I would that I knew*
> *How big they will be!* [20]

By now she is beginning to view the child with a totally new eye and takes him as her own son, the social difference and class distance between kitchen maid and aristocratic heir being erased. For example, as she leaves the bridge behind, the wind is blowing hard. Grusha, however, says to the child who has never been "left in a draught": "You mustn't mind the wind. It's only a poor wretch, too. It has to push the clouds, and it feels the cold more than any of us." Then she sings him a little song which goes:

> *Your father's a thief,*
> *Your mother's a whore,*
> *All the people*
> *Will love you therefore.*
>
> *The son of the tiger*
> *Brings the foals their feed*
> *The snake-child milk*
> *To mothers in need.* [21]

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[19] In his short story of *The Augusburg Chalk Circle*, this point is made obvious as follows: "When the girl had watched the child breathing and sucking its small fist for some time, maybe an hour, she realized that she had now stayed too long and seen too much to be able to leave without the child." See John Willett and Ralph Manheim (eds.), *Bertolt Brecht Short Stories 1921-1946* (London and New York: Methuen, 1883), p. 189.

[20] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 181.

By singing these lines, she has put herself into the position of a mother who stands at the same social level as does "a whore", and metaphorically gives the child a father who is equivalent to "a thief", thus introducing a strong atmosphere of affectionate domesticity or family affection and consolidating her incipient motherhood.

It is clear that her motherhood is generated by and from humanitarian feeling, and in turn, her humanitarian feelings are reinforced by motherhood. In other words, each kind of affectionate emotion is converging with the other, the demarcation between them growing increasingly blurred, until there remains just an amorphous mixture of general benevolence and individual motherhood. In the Chinese play *Chalk Circle* such emotional unity is possessed by Crabapple Bloom from the very beginning, both sides of it being displayed in parallel. Her general benevolence applies to her brother and mother, while her motherly love simultaneously goes to her son. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Brecht, however, such a unity is preceded by separation of the emotions, then followed by a display of it as a notion, and finally by joining up into unity, all in a temporal sequence of occurrences. In this sense, Brecht's play is more about dialectical movement and analytical argument than is Li Xingdao's.

Supported by the background humanitarianism, motherhood makes its advent as a rational solution to the conflict between Grusha's interests and the child's well-being. He is no longer a burden for her, and her efforts for him produce a mother's happiness for her. This dialectical relationship provides an explanation for the huge and enduring power of motherly love.

In comparison with the Chinese play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* appears more philosophical and conceptual, a feature of modern works in general and reflecting a strong tradition of Germanic thinking. The Chinese *Chalk Circle* may be equally profound in content and contain the same quantity of philosophical information, but recognition of the depth of its ideas depends more upon that relativity that is the audience's or reader's ability to appreciate actively. As said before, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* elucidates the relationship between particular motherhood and general benevolence, and in addition it tries to reconcile the moral conflict between egoism and altruism which constantly perplexes people, especially nowadays.

This conflict is typified by the situation in which the heroine encounters the conflict between her moral obligation to save the child and her own welfare which demands she be rid of him as soon as possible. She is fully aware of such a conflict and has been trying to solve it. To start with, her method is to separate the two aspects of the conflict,

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[21] Ibid., p. 182.

namely, to keep her and him separate. This is to no avail, however, and against her will, she sinks ever deeper into the conflict until it becomes impossible for her to extricate herself from it. For example, her original intention is to keep the child for a little while until the nurse comes back, this being basically a humanitarian motivation, as she thinks the child should be treated like "a human being" rather than a "plague". She wants to look after him temporarily until the nurse takes over from her, whereupon she intends to flee for her life like everyone else. To her disappointment, however, no one turns up to take the child, so she has to take him away and try to find a chance to leave him with a family. When she encounters the Ironshirts, she hurries back to the child in great anxiety for him, and when his identity has been discovered and she knocks over one of the Ironshirts and runs away, she then takes a great risk in crossing the glacier, leaving the enemies far behind and fully intending to live with the child forever. As the conflict is thus intensified to its extreme, the dramatic plot correspondingly enters into its first climax. There is a certain tragic air at this point, since egoism and altruism have in no way found a true reconciliation, but nevertheless, as the conflict grows white-hot, an automatic solution arises spontaneously from the conflict itself. This solution is not any laborious and deliberate reconciliation, but a natural attainment of harmony, for neither of the two contrasts has retreated or conceded, and they are brought together perfectly. That is to say, motherly love is generated from humanitarianism or humaneness, and each in turn has enriched the content of the latter.

Thus the play sheds light on the query that, of egoism and altruism, which should be adopted as our moral principle? Recognising the antagonism, Brecht accentuates the reconciliation of the conflict. According to his dialectical outlook, the opposites of the conflict are complementary as well, so egoism and altruism can cohabit as a unity in certain given conditions. This idea is illustrated by the dramatic incidents. Once Grusha regards Michael as her son, the hardships turns into motherhood's joys, which seems an extraordinary natural blessing, and such joy develops yet more fully in the subsequent scenes. If she had abandoned the child for her own safety and tranquillity, she would never have enjoyed such happiness, but on the contrary would indeed have been afflicted by the qualms of her own humanitarian conscience. Such an ethical belief runs through the whole play, and with it Brecht wilfully twists the plot away from tragedy and brings the play with its heroine to the desired happy end.[22] This contrasts to *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, in which the heroine suffering from a schizoid personality "learns soon

[22] Spalter says: "As for the content, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is the one play in which goodness is not without compensation, and in which the rewarder of that goodness is plainly a wish-fulfilling projection of Brecht himself." See Max Spalter, *Brecht's Tradition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 197.

enough that kindness cripples, that to survive one must function wholly without sentiment."[23] Brecht, however, believed human nature to be benevolent and that people were dependent on each other for their well-being, which is why he presented such rudiments of humanitarianism on his stage.

All this tends to cause one to reflect anew upon interpersonal relationships in modern society, in an optimistic way, and should encourage one to distance oneself from such theories of social-Darwinism as that of the survival of the fittest or of incessant competition between individuals, and other related ideas that see human relationships as similar to those of animals. Brecht's play provides an insight into the relationship between the individual and the community, and hereby is betrayed his aversion to capitalism, and his Marxist belief (Marx differs from Darwinism in stressing the determinant function of social existence rather than natural selection through biological and genetic channels).[24] In this particular sense, his play might be termed a "morality" play. This also is not far from the case with the Chinese *Chalk Circle*, in which the moralistic ideas and allegorical meaning are salient. It is by this kinship that Brecht and "the chalk circle" tradition of China are firmly interlaced with each other. Li Xindao's play focuses on the conflict between benevolence and malevolence, justice and injustice, and these opposite forces are personified by Crabapple Bloom and Mrs Ma, the first wife, respectively. In a different time and society, however, Brecht encountered different problems, and he needed to probe deeper into human psychology and elucidate what human nature was, so that he might interpret the complex and fuller connotations of humanitarianism. He unfolds his allegorical story against a backdrop of the Second World War and the rigid Communist regime in the Soviet Union. Criticism of war is the insistent sub-plot of his play, and in its prologue there are many direct references to the Second World War.[25] Given this social and historical context, the play is a condemnation of the bloodshed and genocide of the war, and possibly also an implied condemnation of

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[23] Ibid., p 194.

[24] Cf. Roger Trigg: "It has been alleged that evolutionary theory tends to read off the state of affairs in a particular economic system, namely capitalism, and then project it illegitimately on the biological world. The survival of the fittest is thus the counterpart of the acquisitive competitiveness encouraged, it is suggested, by capitalism. An economic system is thus given an ideological justification by apparently being grounded in human nature." *Ideas of Human Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 96.

[25] "In the ethical scheme of the play," says Lyons, "the existing social and political order is the irrational, consuming, and social and authoritarian commercial world of Setzuen enlarged to the political level of 'The City of Dammed'." See *Bertolt Brecht: The despair and the polemic* (London and Amsterdam: Southern Illinois University Press, Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1968), p. 144. Apart from this critical attitude toward bourgeois ruthlessness and exploitation, this play, more importantly, exhibits the author's hostility to the savage Communist dictatorship as well.

the Communist regime. It shows great concern for the fate of mankind and the future of human society, and tries to prescribe a remedy.

When advocating humanitarianism, Brecht does not deny the reasonableness of pursuing one's own interests, and suggests accordingly that altruistic benevolence should have a measure and limitation beyond which altruism might be easily turned into empty talk, that there should be a balance between it and individual desires. This point is corroborated by his dialogue with Piter Palitzsch, Kathe Rüliche and Manfred Wekwerth:

> P: They say it weakens the maid's claim to the child in the trial scene if her feeling for him is shown as subject to limitations.
>
> B: . . . The maid's suitability for being a mother, her usefulness and reliability are shown precisely by her level-headed reservations about taking the child on.
>
> R: Even the reservations strike me as beautiful. Friendliness is not unlimited, it is subject to measure. A person has just so much friendliness -- no more, no less -- and it is furthermore dependent on the situation at the time. It can be exhausted, can be replenished, and so on and so forth.
>
> W. I'd call that a realistic view.
>
> B. It's too mechanical a one for me: unfriendly. Why not look at it this way? Evil times make humane feelings a danger to humanity.[26]

However, Brecht is not an eclecticist. That is to say, whenever he examines egoism in a positive view, he always firmly stands on humanist ground. He believes human beings are basically benevolent rather than malevolent or neutral, but as shown in the play, the inborn kindness of humans can be and often is soffocated by the social experiences, or even changed into its opposite, as he put it in the quote above: "Evil times make humane feelings a danger to humanity." It has a ring of Marxist materialism which holds that ideology is largely a reflection of the social environments, and is also in accordance with the Marxist theory of alienation -- such a theory being mainly elucidated in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*,[27] which represents the humanitarian side of early Marxism, and drew great attention from the communist world after the Second World War.[28] The theory of "alienation", which was based on this

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[26] As quoted in "Editorial Note to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*", in *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim, vol. 7, op. cit., p. 306.

[27] Peter Brooker says: "It is quite likely that Brecht knew the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* [i.e. the *Paris Manuscript* or *Economic-Philosophy Manuscript* written in Paris and published posthumously in Berlin in 1932] or the *German Ideology* which also discusses alienation. There is some evidence too of his specific reference to 'alienation' as a general condition under capitalism." But it is inappropriate to suggest much "link between the socio-economic category and Brecht's Verfremdung" so this term of his could be translated as "*de*-alienation", as Brooker argues. See *Bertolt Brecht: Dialectics, poetry, politics* (London, New York, Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 79.

[28] Cf. David McLellan: "When they were first published in 1932, they were thought by many to portray a humanism and even an existentialist Marx -- very different from the Marx of later writings -- and this discrepancy gave rise to a protracted debate on the continuity or discontinuity of Marx's

manuscript, appealed very much to certain politically-minded Chinese after Mao's hard line was terminated.[29] His statements can be interpreted as saying that evil is not a priori, but that on the contrary, it is an alienation of human nature, the outcome of losing human nature and is a product of environment, society and epoch.

Human nature can be lost, but it can also be regained, as is symbolically illustrated in the play by the motherhood lost and the motherhood created. It is clear that Brecht is not really seeking for a balance or negotiation between evil and humanity, but that what he pursues is transformation and harmonisation, in which respect he says: "Inside the maid Grusha the child's interests and her own are at loggerheads with one another. She must acknowledge both interests and do her best to promote them both".[30] Only by such conditions can human nature be truly manifested and the potential of humanity fulfilled. Whatever understanding an audience or critics may have, the playwright's own view of his work has high significance, and understanding that can help us to discover more of the play's implications. As he himself puts it: "This way of looking at it, I think, must lead to a richer and more flexible portrayal of the Grusha part."[31]

There is much dispute as to whether blood bonds or social relationships are the most important and powerful influences on people, and as to whether love led by biological ties should be considered eternal and unchangeable. Brecht implies some answers, in respect of which he also diverges from the thematic import of the Chinese play.

It has been already shown by the scenes quoted above that maternity and motherhood are not inevitably just a blessing from Nature, but are subject to social experience. This point is underlined and developed much further in the second half of Brecht's play, where motherhood is seen as not mainly biological, since it can be either

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thought. . . . Nevertheless, many of the positions taken up by Marx in 1844 are still present in the *Crundrisse* and even in *Capital*." "Introduction to *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*", in David McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). p. 75; and Terrell Carver: "[It was] written in Paris in 1844, caused a major re-evaluation of Marx in the mid-twentieth century after they were published and widely circulated in translation." "Reading Marx: Life and works", in Terrell Carver (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 15.

Marx examined the alienation of labour and its consequences: "(1) nature from man, and (2) man from himself, his own active function, his vital activity, it also alienates the species from man; it turns his species-life into a means towards his individual life." *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in *Selected writings*, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

[29] Cf. Ruan Ming, *Lishi zhuanzhedian-shang-de Hu Yaobang* (River Edge [USA]: Bafang Wenhua Qiye Gongsi [offical English name: Global Publishing Co. Inc.], n. d., c. 1990), chs. 9, 10 & 11.

[30] "Editorial Note", op. cit., pp. 306-7.

[31] Ibid, p. 307.

maintained or changed by social behaviour. This understanding is illustrated symbolically by the events in the court.

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A fundamental difference from the plot of the Chinese *Chalk Circle* is that Brecht creates two mothers who represent socially motivated maternity and consanguineous motherhood respectively, this dramatic alteration serving the thematic purpose of comparing and evaluating the two through the test of "the chalk circle" in court. Although this open-minded examination might at first glance seem peculiarly modern and Western, it has in fact already been dealt with to some extent in another ancient Chinese play -- another Yuan dynasty play, *Dream of the Butterflies,* attributed to Guan Hanqing. This work, like *Chalk Circle*, may be classifiable as a courtroom drama, with the same Judge Bao as a major character. Although there is no clue to show that Brecht ever came into actual contact with this work, the court case in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is obviously similar to that of *Dream of the Butterflies*. It is very much preoccupied with activities in a court of law, but, again, is far from being a purely or even principally a detective drama. As with *Chalk Circle*, even though it is throughout involved with a criminal case, towards the end of the play the trial suddenly casts a strong moralistic light across the whole piece.

In contrast to the story of "the chalk circle", the character system of this play consists of a single mother and three sons. (In both *Chalk Circle* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, there is a single son and two mothers.) The plot goes as follows. There is a family with five members, father, mother and three sons. The father is out walking along the street when he bumps into Ge Biao, a powerful rascal notorious in the locality. Ge, berating him for getting in his way, punches him and quasi-accidentally causes his death. Revenging their father, three brothers catch Ge and beat him to death. They are then taken to court. In the second act, Judge Bao, presiding over the court, has a strange dream, in which, strolling in a garden, he sees a butterfly flying past and being caught by a spider's web hanging from a pavilion. Then a big butterfly approaches and rescues the victim. Some while later, a small butterfly is caught in the same way, and Judge Bao, imagining that it too will be rescued in the same manner, waits and watches for that to happen. No such thing happens, however, and he sees the big butterfly who saved the first victim simply fluttering above the flowers, then flying away. He suddenly wakes up and finds that it is high time to open the court session and examine the case. When the three brothers and their mother are questioned, each one of them contends with the others in trying to take the blame for the crime. Faced with such a dilemma, the judge asks the mother her opinion on who should be executed, and she says that her first son is

a filial and loving one, and the second one is good at managing the household economic affairs, and so agrees that her third son undergo the capital penalty. This arouses the judge's suspicion that the third son must be an adopted one. To his surprise, however, she tells him, truthfully, that only the third son is her own flesh-and-blood one, that she is actually the stepmother of the other two, and that out of her sense of moral duty she is more willing to sacrifice her own flesh-and-blood child. Judge Bao is so moved by this that he contrives to substitute a thief for the third son, and the mother and all three sons are reunited in a happy ending for the play.

This play and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* share common ground in their interpretation of maternity from the sociological point of view, emotional unity and social relationship being given precedence over consanguineous coherence. Not only that, the positive view of the correspondence between these two plays is further suggested by the resemblance between the whimsical and eccentric judge Azdak and the sometimes comical Judge Bao. (Curiosity as to the source of the former has occasioned many queries and some discussions.[32]) In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the biological mother takes less care of her own child than does the mother in the social sense, a situation which is echoed by the opposite paradigm in *Dream of the Butterflies*, where the mother cherishes the adopted sons more than her own one. It does not matter for our discussion that there is not a single clue indicating that Brecht knew of this Chinese play, and it is indeed more interesting for us here if two works from vastly different eras and very distantly removed countries share such similarities in the absence of any direct authorial contact.

Dream of the Butterflies is even further from being a detective play than is *Chalk Circle,* as the question of motherly love occupies much more space in it than in the latter. Only its first two acts are closely concerned with the legal process, the third act simply describing the mother's personality and psychology, and the last act being an ironic and absurd farce from any strictly judicial point of view.

It is important to look at the details of Act Three, which is set in the prison where the three brothers are being held in custody. The whole act is a depiction of how the mother visits them. It has rhythmic movement in the lyricism of its songs, but is fairly short on dramatic action. It contributes little to the advance of the plot, but is vital in its revelations of the theme's significance. The mother sees each of her sons and exhibits her

[32] Attention has been drawn towards Magistrate Di, a similar judge figure in another collective series of court case legends, since Brecht once casually remarked that he had used a Chinese novel for his play. J. M. Ritchie argues: "The case with which Azdak deals before the chalk circle test, the miraculous tale of the ham that flies in through Mother Crusinia's window, and of the robber chief who sits down to drink with the judge, are very much in the line with Judge Dee's [Di's] tales of wonder and deduction." See *Brecht: Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1976), p.15.

internal world by a suite of songs interspersed with monologues and dialogues. This act effectively highlights the social elements in motherhood. For example, bringing food for the three brothers in jail, she gives them the food, but with provisos:

> MOTHER. My eldest boy, here is a cake for you. Don't let your youngest brother know! My second son, here is a cake for you. Don't let your younger brother know![33]

Later, when the two elder brothers are released and the youngest is still held in custody pending execution, and she sings the following:

> MOTHER.
> *Both elder brothers have been released,*
> *My third son is left as a victim.*
> *I recall the hardship, all the troubles I had over him in the past:*
> *Ten months of pregnancy I underwent before I had him,*
> *And fed him with my milk for three years.*
> *And yet,*
> *I cannot let your elder brothers be executed,I cannot let people blame me for having no sense of moral right and wrong.*
>
> . . .
>
> *I see you two now able to ascend to Heaven,*
> *Whilst your younger brother is to be lost in the Underworld.*
> *Turning back,*
> *I cannot help shedding tears continuously.*
> (The two elder brothers cry.)
> *Alas, there's nothing else for it,*
> *I'll just save you two,*
> *Then I'll be contented even though he dies!*
> *Poor me!*
> *My child is so young,*
> *When can we see each other again?*
> *I must try to preserve my adopted sons,*
> *Lest posterity blame me.*
> . . .
> *On that day he will be chopped in two by one sword,*
> *His body lying stiff on the street.*
> *I shall never see him again from then on.*
> *His father did not get any paper coins in sacrifice,*
> *The son is judged to be guilty,*
> *When will father and son meet each other again?*
> *Only in dreams can we, mother and son, have reunion.*[34]

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[33] P. 642 -- All quotations of *Dream of the Butterflies* are my translations from *Hudie meng*, in *Yuanqu xuan*, 4 vols., edited by Zang Jinshu (Peking: Zhonghua Shuju), 1958, vol. 2.

[34] Ibid., p. 643.

This, vitally, shows her profound love for her own son, and that it would be quite mistaken to imagine that she is sacrificing love only out of coolly assessed moral duty, even though in her monologues she has repeatedly spoken of not letting people blame her for any lack of sense of moral obligation. In a broader context, her feeling for her adopted sons is primarily that of motherhood, which is mixed with and supported by her sense of righteousness. In this way it stands in contrast to the famous Chinese play *Orphan of the Family Zhao* (*Zhao-shi gu-er*), by Ji Junxiang (13th-14th century AD), in which a child is sacrificed in place of a baby crown prince simply for the sake of the state's integrity and survival, the act of sacrifice being a partial negation of paternal love. On other occasions the mother treats the three equally with the same maternal love, no distinction or partiality being perceptible. For instance, when Ge is killed by them, she sings:

You three, as ever perfect boys,
Should have been more cautious,
How could you have done such a thing?
Although you three had reason to kill him,
You have violated the criminal law.
By these two persons no way connected to you,
In fresh breeze and bright moon,
The future of you three scholars has been ruined,
All those jade mansions and golden horses that awaited you.

. . .

What misery I feel!
How tearful I am!
This disaster fell from heaven,
We're so implicated in it,
How can we disengage ourselves from it!
On one side lies the corpse of the old man their father,
On the other are sacrificed my three boys.
Ah yes, you know the saying:
Blessing can never be repeated on another day,
Disasters come sometimes in pairs.

. . .

Now you can never expect to jump over the dragon gate to success
Or pick off a twig of the cassia tree at the exams,
You will die tragically because of your father.
. . .
You will be taken to the court and pressed to confess,
You will be chained and tortured,

What grief![35]

Here no discrimination or bias is to be detected. She regards each of them as a descendant of the family, as is clearly expressed by the following song:

MOTHER.
At most only one person will be executed,
Neither will the Wang's family line be terminated,
Nor our genealogical tree be broken.[36]

For her, her three sons all have the same importance in the matter of maintaining the family's patriarchal genealogical line, and they are all the objects of her whole-hearted motherly love. Her equal feelings of motherhood toward each boy are also a concomitant of their loving, brotherly feelings for each other. When Ge is found dead, the three boys vie with each other to take the responsibility for his death. The mother's profound maternal affection is bound up with her socially responsible sense of moral duty, but the play shows her as having a socially motivated motherly love that is actually as strong as, or even stronger than, her natural or biological motherly love. This socially motivated love is precisely the aspect that Brecht seeks to emphasise.[37]

In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Grusha's love for the child is even far more than one might generally expect of even a flesh-and-blood mother. For the child's sake, she almost totally sacrifices her own well-being and survival. For example, she marries a dying man in order to get shelter for bringing up the child, but unexpectedly the sick man miraculously recovers and becomes her legal husband for good, thus taking from her the things otherwise most valuable to her: her virginity, her maiden name, her chaste reputation and her most greatest dream, that of marrying Simon. Motherhood in the biological sense cannot, of course, account for any of her actions in the cause of the child.

So far in this discussion two other reference points for Brecht's treatment of "the chalk circle" have been identified, and we have seen that Brechtian humanitarian thought on the problem of maternity was already touched upon by Yuan drama. Brecht, however, takes the idea that is found in *Dream of the Butterflies* onto another plane, and in his play the result of the test with "the chalk circle" is a triumph of the social mother over

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[35] Ibid., p. 634-5.
[36] Ibid., p. 635.
[37] As a motif, the complementary relationship between parental love in a social sense and that with blood bonds also attracts modern Chinese, for instance, the famous nation-wide television series [*Dianshi-lianxu-ju*] *Fengyu liren* (*Beauties in Wind and Rain*), scenario by Gao Chunyu, directed by Zhang Jingbin, the first shown in the summer of 1992.

the biological mother, the former being a mother in the supremely genuine sense. This conclusion is consistent with his general argument that natural inclination, instinct and intuition can be changed by social environment and life experience. What consolidates Grusha's status as a mother is put simply by her in a scene in the court :

> The Cook. What I can't understand is why you want to hold on to it at any price, if it's not yours. . . .
> Grusha. **It's mine, I've brought it up.**[38]

She makes no claim to any blood bond between herself and the child, and her reasoning is simple and succinct: "I won't give him away. I've brought him up, and he knows me."[39] The philosophical implications of these quotations are too obvious to ignore.

The ideological conflict is intensified and vivified by the scene of the two mothers' struggling for the child:

> The First Lawyer (bowing). Thank you, Your Worship. High Court of Justice! Of all bonds the bonds of blood are the strongest. Mother and child -- is there a more intimate relationship? Can one tear a child from its mother? High Court of Justice! She has conceived it in the holy ecstasies of love. She has carried it in her womb. She has fed it with her blood. She has borne it with pain. . . . Nature herself . . . [40]

Grusha refutes this by an appeal to the opposite principle:

> Grusha. I've brought him up "according to my best knowledge and conscience". I always found him something to eat. Most of the time he had a roof over his head. And I went to all sorts of trouble for him. I had expenses, too. I didn't think of my own comfort.[41]

The two parties each stand for the opposite set of ideas, one advocating the decisive importance of consanguinity and the other the decisive role of social ties. The latter wins out eventually, as symbolised by the formal proof and recognition of Grusha's priority in motherhood .

The contrast to Grusha the Governor's Wife, who shows the other side of the same matter. Social influences can change human nature and destroy the power of bonds of consanguinity, just as it can create new bonds of motherhood. In Scene Six, the real mother has lost the reality of her motherhood, and the relationship between her and her child has also been replaced by a social one, having become a sordid, unfeeling commercial concern. That is to say, what links her to the child has come to be a naked

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[38] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 223; emboldenings mine.
[39] Ibid., p. 234.
[40] Ibid., p. 228.
[41] Ibid., p. 228.

concern for wealth, power and fame. That this is so is seen in the speech of her Second Lawyer:

> Second Lawyer (exploding). It's outrageous the way this woman is treated. She's not allowed to enter her husband's palace. The revenue of her estates blocked. She is told cold-bloodedly that it's tied to the heir. She can't do anything without the child. [42]

This explosion blurs out the plain and simple truth that her concern for the child is not a question of love or maternity in any sense, but a totally utilitarian one, nakedly commercial, and completely egotistical, only serving to ironically highlight the hypocrisy of the First Lawyer's speech which has stressed the hardships of her pregnancy and birth-labour in order to try and show how motherly are her affections. This is exactly the same as the situation in *Chalk Circle*, except that Mrs Ma, the squire's first wife, is not the biological mother. In *Chalk Circle*, the total value of the child to Mrs Ma is that of an heir who has the legal right to inherit the family wealth, as is blatantly stated in the following dialogue between her and Zhao, her paramour:

> MRS MA. Zhao, don't you know Squire Ma has been poisoned to death by me, and now I am engaged in a lawsuit against Crabapple Bloom for these properties, and this child is involved as well. You go to the yamen and get everything well arranged for the trial. You'd better get this matter settled while you have the power, and then we will live together for good as a couple!
>
> ZHAO. That is easy. But as for that bastard, it is not yours, so why do you want it? It would be better to let him go!
>
> MRS MA. What a simpleton! How could you have become an official! If I let him go to Crabapple Bloom, he will gain the Mas' property as he is Squire Ma's offspring, then I won't be able to get even a cent. Most likely she will call the midwife and neighbours in as witnesses, but it doesn't matter, I have bribed them already. You don't need to take care of these matters outside the yamen. All you need to attend to is the matters inside the court.
>
> ZHAO. You are right indeed, Madam.[43]

We see that her characterisation thus corresponds with that of the Governor's Wife. In another respect, the Governor's Wife stands in sharp contrast to the mother in *Dream of the Butterflies*. She, as the real mother, cares for her own child only in a sordid mercenary manner, whereas the other, although a stepmother, loves her adopted son more than her own sons. The two sides of the same thesis are thus iterated. Aspects of

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[42] Ibid., p. 229.

[43] P. 1117 -- All quotations of *Chalk Circle* are my translations from *Huilan ji*, in *Yuanqu xuan*, op. cit., vol. 3.

human nature such as motherly love can be lost through scheming and calculation, while benevolence and morality as social influences can render motherhood a second nature.[44]

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In altering the story of "the chalk circle", Brecht's intention was to elucidate the dialectical relationship between what is known as human nature and human beings' social nature. The prologue of his play emphasises the latter, with an elucidatory historical background. In some versions of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle,* for instance, the edition from which the quotations are taken in this discussion, the lengthy prologue, which seems relevant neither to the plot nor the theme, may seem puzzling. Werner Hecht says:

> In all three scripts and the *Sinn und Form* version this was called "prologue", and perhaps as a result many critics and directors have taken it as not forming an integral part of the play. However, as Brecht pointed out in his letter to his publisher Suhrkamp, it forms the beginning of the first script and, though altered, was never omitted.[45]

In fact, though it is omitted by some versions, for instance, the script of 1947 in *Two Plays by Bertold Brecht*[46], and it is also left out by some directors in their stage productions[47].

Whether retained or omitted, the prologue is controversial, so it seems worthwhile to ascertain its meaning and function. Brecht says regarding its significance:

> Your dislike of the prologue puzzles me somewhat; it was the first bit of the play to be written by me in the States. You see, the problem posed by this parable-like play has got to be derived from real life needs, and in my view this was achieved in a light and cheerful manner. Take away the prologue, and it becomes impossible to understand on the one hand why it wasn't left as the Chinese Chalk Circle; and on the other why it should be called Caucasian. I first of all wrote the little story which was published in *Tales from the Calendar*. But on coming to dramatise it I felt just this lack of elucidatory historical background.[48]

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[44] According to his posthumous notes (1956), Brecht intended to substitute a Marxist term "dialectical theatre" for "epic theatre", "Apparently because epic suggested formalism, whereas 'dialectical' would emphasize the constant process of change in man and society." See Felicia Hardison Londré, *The History of World Theatre*, op. cit., p. 431.

[45] As quoted in "Notes to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*", in *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays*, vol. 7, edited by Willett and Manheim op.cit., p. 300.

[46] New York: Grove Press, 1956.

[47] James K. Lyon says, "American audiences no doubt would have found his utopian portrayal in the prologue as implausible as a director in Russia did years later when he deleted it as being unplayable for Soviet audiences." See his *Brecht and the American Theater* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 130.

[48] As quoted in *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays*, vol. 7, edited by Willett and Manheim, op. cit., p. 304.

In regard to the same matter, James K. Lyon says:

> The prologue and epilogue, for example, which he considered organic to the play, illustrate the heavy-handed didacticism that would have limited the play's appeal in America. Hans Viertel argued with Brecht from the outset that they were aesthetically and dramatically poor.[49]

It is not easy to pin down the meaning of Brecht's comment, and what is difficult to see is why the play would be "left as the Chinese Chalk Circle" without the prologue, and why it is called an "elucidatory historical background". Is it mainly to reinforce the possibility of the realisation of the illusion[50], or, in stylistic terms, should it be "seen, and in good productions emerges -- as a third element in the same folk tradition that actually enhances the magical effect as a whole"?[51]

Let us first examine the textual evidence. The prologue concerns the dispute between two *kolchos* villages over the ownership of the land which used to belong to the "Galinsk goat-breeding *kolchos*". The background to this dispute is outlined by the expert of the State Reconstruction Commission right at the beginning: When Hitler's armies were approaching, the Galinsk goat-breeding *kolchos* had been ordered by the authorities to move its goat-herds further to the east, and now, with the war being over, this *kolchos* is demanding resettlement in its original valley, but its request is rejected by its neighbouring village, the Rosa Luxemburg fruit-growing *kolchos*. This fruit-growing *kolchos* insists that the valley, having a scanty growth of grass, should be used for the replanting of orchards and vineyards. Then follows a lengthy debate, and eventually, the delegates from the goat-feeding *kolchos* are convinced and concede the argument, so the matter is settled in a friendly manner. To celebrate the settlement and welcome the Galinsk delegates, the Rosa Luxemburg *kolchos* arranges the performance of an old legend called *Chalk Circle*. That ends the prologue, and the legend of *Chalk Circle* is narrated by a Singer, a character as we have seen of a special function in the play, the story simultaneously being dramatised. This prologue counts as the first scene, but some versions of the play start directly from the second scene without any vestige of the prologue.

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[49] James K. Lyon, *Brecht and the American Theater*, op. cit., p. 130.

[50] Charles R. Lyons says: "The prologue clarifies the unreality of the action which exists in reality as the aesthetic realization of the Story Teller and offers the delight and satisfaction of the lovely illusion, -- an illusion in which the reward of compassion is celebrated as exceptional in a world in which compassion has only but a fragile and momentary life." See his *Bertolt Brecht: The despair and the polemic* (London and Amsterdam: Southern Illinois University Press, Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1968), p. 154. However, the prologue has much more significance as will be argued below.

[51] Jan Needle & Peter Thomson, *Brecht* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 208.

The prologue shows the playwright's humanitarian concern with the then current political events and his philosophical reflections on the fate of mankind in the near past and future. In its ideas it is connected to the main text in the following way. It is set in the Caucasus, where the legendary story of the chalk circle is also said to have taken place, immediately after the war against the Nazis, which is alluded to through the bloodshed which takes place later on in the play. It is easy to see that the prologue serves to stress the linkage of past and present and the connection between drama and reality, and it exhorts audience and readers to comprehend the legendary account in terms of the current international events. In this way the individual characters in the play are tied to the common fate of mankind. The prologue starts with a stage direction as follows: "Among the ruins of a badly shelled Caucasian village the members of two *kolchos* villages are sitting in a circle, smoking and drinking wine", and there are more signs of the recent war. The people are mainly women and old men, plus a few soldiers, and among them is an expert from the State Reconstruction Commission. He proceeds to inform the audience of the tragic events of the Galinsk *kolchos* leaving its homeland because of the war. These remnant issues of the war are shortly afterwards echoed by the massacre and rebellion in Scene Two, and interpersonal tension corresponding to the war actually lasts till the very end of the play. In this way, present events and legendary-feeling history are organically combined.[52] From this, we realise that Brecht's intention is to apply his humanitarianism, as embodied by an old Chinese tale, to the reality of his times, and that is perhaps why he said that taking away the prologue would leave his play as "the Chinese Chalk Circle" and it would then be impossible to understand why it should be called "Caucasian". Brecht never in fact put across this notion as clearly as he might have done, for unknown reasons possibly concerning Communist politics.

In the light of all this, one can at least be aware that what is termed "elucidatory historical background" does not mean the same thing as the background to the times and general situation against which the plot is unfolded. It may be a background for the performance of the "inner-play", the play within the play, namely, the singing and dramatisation of the story of *Chalk Circle*, but it is by no means the background for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.[53] As said before, it forms a referential system to the content,

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[52] If we think of the prologue as the starting point of the subject matter, the main part of the play consisting of the ensuing scenes is only an inter-play -- a play within a play, in which case the relationship between the prelude and the ensuing parts resembles that between reality and art, and the audience may easily gain the illusion that the plot starts from the prologue, until they have entered the dimensions of the real dramatic plot, the train of incidents about the Chalk Circle.

[53] Apart from the thematic significance, the Prologue aims at being "a play in within the play", "a stage on the stage" which is entirely a technique of Epic Theatre, and which facilitates "dramaturgical disruption of the stage illusion, ... the insertion of direct address to the public, the recital of critical or

that is to say Brecht uses the word "background" not as a technical term of dramaturgy but as a metaphorical one. This background warns the audience that what Brecht is interested in is not the old legend as his prototype in itself, but its significance to his times and society. Here lies a vital difference between the Chinese drama *Chalk Circle* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. In Brecht's play it does not matter whether the characters wear Chinese costumes or Caucasian ones, but what is vital is the historical spirit that the work conveys. In this sense, the Chinese version should be regarded as an archetype which contains the general idea values, while *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and other works as variants of it particularise and specify the generalities of those values.

It is only when the function of the prologue has been identified in this manner can one understand the frequent politicised remarks in the play, as, for instance, in Scene Five:

> Azdak: . . . Why do you scratch yourself, brother? War! Too long a war! And no justice! . . . (He sings, . . .)
>
> *Why don't our sons bleed any longer, why don't our daughters weep any more?*
> *Why do only the calves in the slaughterhouse have any blood, why only willows on Lade Urmi tears?*
> *The Grand King must have a new province, the peasant must relinquish his savings.*
> *In order to capture the roof of the world, the cottage roofs have to be torn down.*
> *Our men are scattered in all directions, so that the great ones can eat at home.*
> *The soldiers kill each other, the marshals salute each other.*
> *The widow's tax money has to be fingered to see if it's good, the swords break.*
> *The battle has been lost, but the helmets have been paid for.*
> *Is that right? Is that right?* [54]
>
> Azdak. The second verse is about the peace. (He sings.)
>
> *The offices are jammed, the officials are working in the streets.*
> *The rivers overflow their banks and lay waste the fields.*
> *Those incapable of letting down their own trousers rule countries.*
> *Those who can't count up to four devour eight courses.*
> *The corn farmers look round for buyers, but see only the starving.*
> *The weavers go home from their looms in rags.*
> *Is that right? Is that right?* [55]

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didactic statements or songs. ..." See Margot Berthold, "The Theatre of Commitment", in her *A History of World Theatre* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972), p.p. 641-2.

[54] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 206.

[55] Ibid., p. 207.

There is development from *Chalk Circle* to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, but, all the same, that does not mean that the Chinese play is inferior to the latter in any sense. The development is due to the advance of Time, as a particular literary motif tends to reflect the historical spirit of a particular era. On the other hand, the value and position of "the Chinese Chalk Circle", either as a dramatic work or as a literary motif, is affirmed by the plain fact that it not only appealed to its own times and culture, but also continues to have such impact on the West after so many centuries.[56] The debate it embodies is of course likely to be one of universal and eternal interest, since parenthood and parental love will presumably always involve some form of the conflict that it portrays.

Apart from functioning as an "elucidatory historical background" to the central idea, the prologue is self-sufficient and performs the self-sufficient task of conveying the embryo of the theme. The argument about the usage and ownership of the land is highly symbolic and full of implications, and the philosophical thesis that Nature can and should be altered is advanced. The debate goes as follows:

> The Old Man (right, sighing.) Death to the Fascists! But I will come to the point and explain to you why we want to have our valley back. There are a great many reasons, but I want to begin with one of the simplest. Makinae Abachildze, unpack the goat cheese. . . . Do you like the cheese?
>
> The Old Man (left). The answer is yes.
>
> The Old Man (right). Oh. (Bitterly.) I might have guessed you know nothing about cheese.
>
> The Old Man (left). Why not? When I tell you I like it!
>
> The Old Man (right). Because you can't like it. Because it's not what it was in the old days. And why isn't it? Because our goats don't like the new grass as they used to like the old. Cheese is not cheese because grass is not grass, that's it. Mind you put that in your report.[57]

The old man who is wanting to maintain the old natural conditions represents the opposite point of view to the thesis that Brecht promotes in this play. The old man goes on: "The new grazing land is no good, whatever the young people may say. I tell you, it's impossible to live there. It doesn't even smell of morning here in the morning."[58]

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[56] Its international appeal can be partly corroborated by the situation of Bengali theatre. Aside from *The Exceptional and the Rule* (the first Brecht play adapted for Bengali theatre) and *Life of Galileo*, "two other Brecht plays which have been very popular with Bengali translators/adapters as well as with producers are *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Good Person of Setzuan*. The first translation of the former was done from the original German by Asoke Sen, a theatre enthusiast and scholar in the mid-1960s. Since then there have been one translation and **four adaptations** of the same play, most of them made in the 1970's." Emboldenings mine; See Arundhati Banerjee, "Brecht Adaptations in Modern Bengali Theatre: A study in Reception", in *Asian Theatre Journal* (University of Hawaii Press), vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 1990, p. 3.

[57] Ibid., p. 144.

[58] Ibid.

Soon the debate parallels the forthcoming dramatic tension of the ensuing scenes as the old man on the right puts forward his argument: "The valley has belonged to us for centuries." This signals the opening of the battle of ideas, and foreshadows the dramatic conflict over possession of the child. His remark, however, is rejected by a soldier: "What does that mean -- for centuries? Nothing belongs to anyone for centuries. When you were young you didn't belong to yourself, but to Prince Kazbeki."[59] This refutation accords with the overall theme. The argument continues:

> The Old Man (right). According to the law the valley belongs to us.
> The Girl Tractor Driver. The laws will have to be re-examined in any case, to see whether they are still valid.[60]

In the context of the later events, this remark implies that natural law, which is taken for granted, should be re-examined, and that nature itself may changed as well. Various philosophical systems, and indeed natural sciences, hold that everything is moving and changing, and that nothing can maintain its nature eternally the same and keep its identity forever as it is. The prologue seems to nurture the embryo of the dramatic theme, an inchoate thesis more fully interpreted by the plot later on. Love between mother and son is not inborn, claims Brecht, and maternal love is not unconditionally durable. The automatic causality between blood bond and emotional tie must be denied, and instinctive affinity should be questioned by sceptical and logical analysis. This attitude complies with his "epic theatre" view of style, "epic theatre" being a term that he intended to replace by another, "dialectical theatre". For example, while talking about the V-effect in Asiatic acting, he says: "In point of fact the only people who can profitably study a piece of technique like Chinese acting's V-effect are those who need such as a technique for quite a definite social purpose", this purpose being that of historicising the events portrayed onstage. History, he holds, not only applies to the environment, but also to man, and it is in essence opposed to the bourgeois theatre which "emphasised the timelessness of its objects", and "its [i.e. bourgeois theatre's] representation of people" which is defined by its "alleged 'eternal human'". [61]

The argument ends with the agreement that the valley be used for an irrigation project, which agreement signifies the failure of the advocacy of adherence to "natural law". This outcome in the prologue is distantly echoed by the verdict on the ownership of the child in the finale. By now the prologue has drawn a thematic outline which

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[59] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 145.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Cf. *Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic*, translated with notes by John Willett (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.), 1964, pp. 96-7.

coincides with that delineated by the whole play. In other words, the prologue is a miniature of the ideas of the play as a whole, an allegory for allegory.

Resonating to the prologue, an extra detail near the end of the play further reinforces the central idea. When Grusha claims the child, Simon, her lover, firmly supports her by claiming that he is the father of the child:

> Azdak. How did you get into that mountain village?
> Grusha. On foot, Your Worship. And he was mine.
> Simon. I am the father, Your Worship.[62]

Just as with her maternal love, this fatherhood is also created by societal influences. Corresponding to this is the following passage when Grusha has at last divorced her nominal husband and is about to live with Simon:

> Grusha. . . . (to Simon.) You like him?
> Simon. With my respect, I like him.
> Grusha. Now I can tell you: I took him because on that Easter Sunday I got engaged to you. And so it is **a child of love**. . . .[63]

The reason stated by Grusha should not be taken literally, and what she attempts to do is to delude people into concluding that it is "a child of love", so that Simon can naturally acquire the identity of a father to the child, even though he, like Grusha, has no genetic linkage with the child. This involves the sociological induction and philosophical interpretation that love may bear in a child in the social sense, whereas a child borne in the biological sense does not necessarily result from love, but from sex.[64]

In short, by means of the prologue, the thematic distinction between *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Chalk Circle* is further analysed and stressed in the light of ideas of the twentieth century which re-examine the philosophical relationship between the biological and social influences that usually condition the nature of motherly love as a whole. It lays emphasis on the decisive role of society, which can change Nature and create a second nature, human nature.[65]

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[62] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 230.

[63] Emboldenings mine, p. 236.

[64] According to Ruth Berlau, Brecht's close female collaborator and mistress, her pregnancy and "the anticipated birth (in 1944) sparked conversations on themes that Brecht was treating in the play, such as the conflict inherent in claims on a child of blood versus a child of love, or the question whether one can love someone else's child as much as one's own." The child was born after the completion of the play, but "in later years, Berlau inverted the chronology by telling visitors that Brecht named the child in the play after hers, whereas the child in the play was 'born' some months earlier." -- See James K. Lyon, *Brecht and the American Theater*, op.cit., p. 130.

[65] *Trommeln in der Nacht* (*Drums in the Night*) "was staged by Otto Falckenberg in 1922 first at the Munich Kammerspiele and soon afterward in Berlin. The author wanted posters to be hung in the

auditorium with such aphorisms as 'Inside his own skin every man is the best man' ." See Margot Berthold, *A History of World Theatre* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972), p. 635.

CHAPTER V: Universal Love

Part Two. The Alienation Effect

The theme of love is unparalleled in importance, as is affirmed by literary statistics alone, and its importance is intimately connected with probably the most striking or radical dramaturgical experiments of modern times, those carried out by Brecht himself. The discussions of these techniques which follow, by stressing the vitality of their contribution, simultaneously confirm the status of the theme of love, since it was primarily this theme that Brecht chose to marry with his structural theory in his most famous play, a clear sign of his estimation of the love topic.

Although Brecht had his own motives, it is informative to take a brief closer look at the Chinese influences on his drama. It is by now common knowledge that Brecht was influenced by Chinese and other Oriental dramaturgy. It is generally correct to assume so, as Brecht himself has anyway stated it to be the case, and, even more reliably, he mentions Chinese theatre quite often, if but laconically. One needs, however, to look into more detail to see just how he was affected by Chinese theatre, and to provide textual evidence for the influences. To this end, it is important to make a further comparison among his *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Li Xingdao's *Chalk Circle* as its Chinese counterpart and *Dream of the Butterflies* as a thematic referent to it, since they bear obvious resemblance, at least in a thematic light as discussed above.

There has not been much solid research on the influence of Chinese dramaturgy on Brecht. This circumstance may be ascribed to two factors. In the first instance, scholars on Brecht have not paid enough attention to Chinese drama, and furthermore Brecht's contact with Chinese theatre was not particularly close or solid, and even though he did attend performances of traditional Chinese plays and was extremely stimulated by them and subsequently spoke highly of Chinese theatre, it seems that what influence occurred was largely in the form of general inspiration, by which his latent dramaturgical attitudes were aroused or furthered. From the available materials, there is no evidence of his having been in any more concrete touch with Chinese theatre, and what remarks he does make on Chinese theatrical techniques also betray his limited knowledge of Chinese drama. Even taking this into account, we realise that none the less Chinese drama did exercise some influence on him, and that it was through a Chinese play that Brecht truly

found himself. It can be deduced that this playwright, by and large inspired by a very limited amount of Chinese drama, then endeavoured to figure out a vague image of it by means of his own prior understanding and dramaturgical logic.

The fact that there is not much factual evidence of actual communion between Brecht and the Chinese theatre does not make the connection less intriguing. On the contrary, it is more admirable and tantalising that, given the small amount of actual communication, there is a spiritual identity between his works and Chinese drama which belongs to a quite different tradition of artistry.

Brecht began his career drama and evolved his advanced dramaturgical theories around 1920 against a German theatrical background of Naturalism, on the stage of which verisimilitude was regarded as the final aim and replicas of everyday life were therefore created. The Germanic naturalistic theatre was an embodiment of the prevailing European theatrical concept that theatre should create an illusion of reality and hypnotise the audience into a state of hallucination. The action on stage should put the audience into a trance, the events dramatised ought to carry the audience away, and actors should entirely identify with the characters they are playing. Similarly, the audience should participate, in a special sense, in the activities of those on stage, and share their sorrows and joys. If such conditions are fulfilled, drama has a temporary magical spell which blurs the distinction between theatre and society, and between the play and life, making them identical to each other. This kind of theatre is inveighed against as anti-critical, because "the delights of art subserve education",[1] and moreover, although it is referred to as Naturalistic, it never realistically reflects reality or truly depicts the truth of life, and as he argues: "There is little chance of hearing any genuine human voice, and one gets the impression that life must be exactly like a theatre instead of the theatre being just like life."[2]

As a reaction to the non-realistic tradition, Naturalism satisfies the demands of modern times, and its debt has to be acknowledged to the development of science and technology, which has improved and enriched existing stage facilities, fuelling changes that may well be termed "revolutionary" in such areas as modern stage-lighting, three-dimensional scenery, realistic properties, and highly technical and ingenious stage machinery. Moreover, the adoption of such inventions or embellishments has not been subject simply to the free choice of the theatre, but has been virtually obligatory. When new achievements of science or technology have become available to be capitalised on by

[1] As quoted in John, Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: a study from eight aspects* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 168.
[2] Ibid.

the theatre, the existing dramaturgy has been, for a multiplicity of reasons, apparently obliged to utilise them, for the creative expansion of stage facility, fashionable cachet, and commercial impact that they afford, although the trend towards innovative technology may well reverse once it attains its zenith in any particular era, as it did in the case of Elizabethan theatre, which availed itself of much more theatrical machinery than did subsequent ages. The obligation to utilise "science and technology" had caused the theatrical arts to deviate from their more purely artistic aims, and the core dramatic values were drowned in the grandiose display of theatrical technicalities. That is why, with the further influence passed on from the time of Naturalism, came two related opposite movements "standing out in imperial domination -- on the one hand, realism, and, on the other, a spectacularism which might express itself variously in romantic splendour, in sensational 'real life' incidents and in historical pageantry."[3] When the trend reaches its extreme, however, and other genres, such as film in modern times for instance, pursue the same aim with greater success, the theatre may lose its prominence, and it is time for another theatrical revolution. At this historical juncture, various explorations in all directions become the vogue, and nowadays these are included under the short generic term of *Modernism.*

At the same time, in the twentieth century Oriental arts and literature have increasingly found their way into the Western field of vision. Early this century, Chinese drama showed its face in Europe and America, and was warmly applauded by Brecht, Meyehold, Yeats, Chaplin and others[4]. From this we can verify that, apart from the concrete communications between West and East, the European stage was also inspired by the Oriental artistic spirit, although the inspiration to European drama came, in some cases, through the media of other artistic categories, for example from Oriental or specifically Chinese painting and the Chinese plain stage without scenery.[5] As remarked,

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[3] Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre: A study of theatrical art from the beginning to the present day* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 196.

[4] Cf. Gao Mang, "Mei: Xiezai woguo jingju dashi Mei Lanfang Xiansheng danchen 100 zhounian-zhiji", Peking *Renmin Ribao Haiwaiban,* Nov. 3rd, 1994, p. 7.

[5] The early anti-naturalist movement took place in the field of scenery and stage design, where symbolic scenery replaced.realistic scenery, thus coinciding with the situation of Chinese stage conditions and histrionic techniques past and present, and having the same purpose as the latter, that of dispensing with any conventional scenery and stage setting. This movement split into two very mutually opposed groups. The first school, represented by Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig, tried to simplify the painting of the backcloth and the stage structure, and subordinate the stage environment to acting, and substituted the symbolic stage structure for the conventional one. "The designer should pick out one or two dominant images of the play, and construct of these a setting which will symbolize the whole" (See Bamber Gascoigne, *World Theatre*, London: Ebury Press, 1971, p. 274). The other school in the same anti-realistic current was tending in precisely the opposite direction, towards more rather than less painting, and its idea was to throw the stage open as an area to be filled with the fantasy and invention of genuine painters, established names of the avant-garde art galleries. This ideal was translated into practice in the 1890s, first in the small theatres, and drew large audiences after 1900. For

the flourishing of Naturalism owed much to the copious invention of stage facilities, and so, similarly, further changes to stage facilities could bring about a new revolution. In fact some Modernist drama began with just such a reform of scenery. Symbolic scenery as opposed to the realistic kind can easily militate against a Naturalistic atmosphere and contort intended ideas into different ones, even their opposite notions, and it is not surprising to learn that famous and innovative artists such as Picasso first made their name as artists of theatrical scenery.

The foregoing argument points out the undoubted role of Oriental culture in the development of counter-realistic drama in the West. It may raise Eurocentric hackles East and West to say that Western Modernism has been to a large extent stimulated by Oriental art, but this hypothesis becomes even more academically acceptable in the light of another even more likely to be hackle-raising proposition that we would advance, which is that even Naturalism in certain senses may well owe its flourishing to Oriental, or more specifically Chinese, dramaturgy. It is a solid fact, for instance, that in the mid-Qing dynasty during the late eighteenth century stage facilities for imperial palace performances were considerably mechanised, and Lord Macartney on his embassy to China saw dramatic performances in the court of the Qing which resorted to astonishingly highly elaborate stage machinery.[6] It is quite safe to say that his account of this kind of Chinese drama might well have exerted some measure of influence on the Naturalist vogue.[7] At the beginning of this century, Mei Lanfang's performance clearly did inspire the American theatrical world.[8] Even though concrete communications have

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instance, 1909 witnessed the founding of Ballets Russes, in which Diaghilev presented a world-wide audience with the works of many extremely distinguished painters from Germany and Russia, and in Paris of the 1920s, Diaghilev used a much wider range of artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Braque and so on, the works of some of whom, such as Picasso, bore the evident marks of Oriental influence or inspiration.

[6] See William Dolby, "A Diversity of Dramatic Styles during the Early Qing", in his *A History of Chinese Drama* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), p. 143.

[7] Richard Southern says: "There has been made available in recent years some considerable amount of information about Chinese theatre make-up, properties, costumes and musical instruments. . . . The Chinese offer us, however, a splendid example of the pure 'organized-stage' phase of the theatre. Their classical stage is among the simplest, although the richest, in the world. . . . Its description is so simple as to be nearly 'perfect'; . . . there could be no more complete (nor scarcely any more advanced) expression of the booth-stage tradition conformed into a national form." "The Organized Stage", in his *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 205.

[8] Cf. A. C. Scott: "*The World*'s critic on the other hand was impressed by the austere stage and considered that the Chinese 'are some centuries ahead of us in their neglect of the material clutter of stage scenery and furnishing. . . . the Chinese substitute for these encumbrances a few conventional gestures, which their audiences have for centuries been accustomed to translate instantly and imaginatively into the appropriate scenery and action.'" "Chinese drama goes to America", in his *Mei Lan-Fang: The life and times of a Peking actor* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1971), p. 110.

been very limited, spiritual inspirations are intrinsically of greater, more profound importance, as is seen particularly in the case of Brecht.

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It is controversial whether Brechtian theory on epic theatre regarding V-effect is wholly applicable to his theatrical practice, but in any case the theory does coincide with some Chinese conceptions of theatre.

In the first place, ancient Chinese drama rarely seeks to convey a pure and pervasive atmosphere of *pity* and *fear*, and accordingly, there is no pure tragedy in the stricter Western sense. That is why most Western dramatic theories, Aristotelian, Hegelian and so on, can hardly be applied to classical Chinese drama, whereas Western dramatic theory as a whole originated from Aristotle and has also since been developing in the basic direction prescribed by his *Poetics*. Owing to the lack of intensified and enduring pity and fear in Chinese plays, classical Chinese dramatic theory does not contain concepts like catharsis or the purging of emotion, and theatrical practice has not attempted so much to create illusion or cause entrancement such as characterises Naturalism in the West. This distance from Naturalism may generally be considered due to the simplicity of stage decors and facilities and a limited level of technology, but more reliably and importantly were due to fundamental Chinese theatrical concepts. Chinese classical drama has not aimed in the same directions as Naturalism. Had it wished, it would surely have done so successfully and to a high degree, since, as we have seen above with regard to Qing imperial performances, technical ingenuity and visual artistry were far from being real problems for Chinese culture, which was fully capable of producing stage machinery complex enough to astound even sophisticated Western visitors. In spite of this great latent potential, and indeed in spite of notable experiments, Chinese theatre through the ages did not of its own accord converge into the Naturalist stream as drama did in the West. Anyone who has attended a performance of classical Chinese plays can strongly appreciate this point, as no doubt did Brecht as he enthused over Chinese stage performances.

As well may be surmised from the foregoing disquisition, classical or traditional Chinese theatre has an effect on audiences which is essentially close to the V-effect. Generally speaking, the Chinese theatre has always been understood as a venue where a story is dramatised, and it has a strong entertainment quality, so that theatre-goers are hardly able to lose their real identity as spectators, connoisseurs, critics and so forth. This effect is just what Brecht so eagerly sought after.

This Chinese dramatic effect so similar to the V-effect is in the first place due to the simplicity, which does not mean primitivity or backwardness, of Chinese drama's

stage furniture.[9] The classical Chinese stage is generally supposed to be simple, and many comparisons have been made between it and the Greek and Elizabethan stages. Although it is difficult to ascertain when this situation first arose, it is clear that it prevailed until the beginning of this century, when it was suddenly shaken by violent impacts from Western drama. Owing to the great distance at least later traditional Chinese drama maintained from ordinary verisimilitude, sober and healthy-minded audiences could hardly mistake what is on the stage for reality, even if they were to have strenuously exerted themselves intentionally to do so. For a long period of Chinese history, it has been a convention to be most sparing in the use of stage settings, stage decor or properties, limiting the furniture to such basics as "curtain and screen (*menlian taizhang*)", "a single table and a pair of chairs (*yizhuo eryi*)", and the properties to such convenient items as horse-whip (*mabian*), "cloth city (*bucheng*)" and "water-flag (*shuiqi*)", which have a wide range of symbolic uses, and convey a wealth of aesthetic significance.[10] In this dramatic ambience, the table and chairs are not only stage furniture used in their usual functions, but can be turned into many other stage settings as needed, such as a bridge, a wall, a city entrance, a fortress, a court, a drawing room and so on and so forth. For many ages there was no scenery onstage, until the advent of modern times, the twentieth century, when even for traditional-style drama the theatrical architecture began to change towards the Western style proscenium, and scenic backdrops and modern lighting were also introduced. Nonetheless, even during this century there has remained a strong aversion on the part of Chinese classical drama or drama in classical style and performed in traditional way (*chuantongxi*) against such imported innovations. This very aversion seems of itself to indicate that simplicity of stage has largely been the result of free choice in accordance with special Chinese concepts of theatre, rather than a compulsory feature imposed by technical limitations.[11]

We are met with a vital query. Can we assume that this situation has applied to the whole historical course of traditional Chinese drama? It must be admitted that there is a

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[9] Jiao Juyin says: "It is a tradition not to use any scenery on the stage. This is not entirely due to the lack of good material conditions in feudal society or the long-term backward economy within which drama originated and developed," and "theatrical fine arts must be reduced to a minimum, otherwise acting and character can not be emphasised. . . . Acting does not come from scenery, but scenery from acting." See Chen Gang (ed.), *Jiao Juyin xiju pinglun ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1979), pp. 346-7.

[10] Cf. Zhang Geng and others, *Zhongguo xiqu tonglun* (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1989), ch. 8 / sect. 2.

[11] Concerning this, A. C. Scott says about the lighting for classical Chinese stage: "Electricity led to the use of footlight and effects but, until 1949 at any rate, they tended to be crude and harsh and the Chinese never seemed to achieve the happy blending of the new with the old as the Japanese have done in the Kabuki theatre in these matters." *The Classical Theatre of China* (New York: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1957), p. 222.

serious lack of evidence for the earlier times, and so some people consider the assumptions to be based on more recent performances of classical-style drama, rather constituting a uniform truth for all classical drama throughout the ages.[12] On the other hand, however, although the extant records do not contribute much in support, neither do they manifest any solid rebuttal of the notion of overall stage simplicity.[13] Taking this ambiguous situation into account, all we may safely say is that we need to be somewhat cautious in the breadth of our application of our general conclusions. We cannot, for example, be absolutely certain that such simplicity of stage facility prevailed in the theatre of the Yuan dynasty.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of sufficient direct evidence, the condition of the stage in any historical period can be suggested by other factors, such as the text, since a certain mould of text is likely to have conformed to a certain mould of stage practice. That is to say, the dramatic script to some extent will probably suggest the decor and furnishing of the stage. For instance, the text of a Naturalistic play prescribes what kind of stage facilities it requires, and we understand that it would be well nigh impossible to put such a play onto the strictly Shakespearean stage. Employing this method of surmisal, it would appear that the stage condition of *Chalk Circle* and *Dream of the Butterflies* was originally also one of considerable simplicity which would have heightened any effect similar to the V-effect.

In these two plays, there is great freedom in the changing of the dramatic locale, which is contrary to the restrictions of the Three Unities demanded by eminent ancient dramatic theory in the West. The daring, considerable and rapid changes of scene location would have made it impossible or very awkward indeed to provide adequate or appropriate scenery and physical stage settings for the ever-changing locales, so it is a reasonable hypothesis that there was at most only a scanty amount of scenery and furniture. The great frequency of change of place seen in these two Chinese dramas would be avoided according to the tenets of Naturalism. In Act One of *Dream of the Butterflies,* for example, when the old man Wang is killed by Ge, the local policeman goes to Wang's house and informs Wang's wife and sons. Hardly is this scene over than the wife and boys arrive at the street where the old man has died. It is quite surprising

[12] The stage of Yuan drama is somehow described as the following: "These stages are always essentially the same. There is no curtain, there are no wings, and no flies. At the back of the stage are two doors, one for entrance and one for exit. The actors who are to perform the first piece come in by the entrance door all together. When the piece is over, and as they are filing out through the exit door, those who are cast for the second piece pass in through the other door. There is no interval, and the musicians who sit on the stage, make no pause. . .". See Herbert A. Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature* (London: William Heinemann, 1900), p. 259.

[13] Cf. Liao Ben, *Song-Yuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu* (Peking: Wenhua-yishu Chubanshe, 1989).

that, instead of narrating them, all the spatial changes are part of the dramatic action, and the locales are physically, not reportedly, changed twice within a nowadays surprisingly short space of time:

> GE. (Beating Old Wang to death . . .) This old man pretends to be dead in order to implicate me. I'm not afraid!-- Killing you is just like taking a tile off a roof! Lay a charge against me if you like! (Exit.)
> (Enter the Local Policeman).
> POLICEMAN. Elder Wang! Middle Wang! Little Wang! Are you at home?
> (Enter the Three Brothers.)
> THREE BROTHERS. What do you want us for?
> POLICEMAN. I am from the police. Your father was killed by an unknown assailant in Chang'an Street. Mother, come on out here!
> (Enter Wang's Wife.)
> WIFE. Children, why are you so alarmed?
> LITTLE WANG. Daddy's been killed.
> WIFE. Alas, what is to be done! (Sings.)
> *I must think hard and carefully,*
> . . .
> (She walks, sees the body and cries.)[14]

As the locales are twice rapidly changed, from the street where the old man has been killed then to the Wangs' house, and then in a flash back to the street again, it is clear here that there cannot have been any physical stage setting or restrictive scenery, the spatial or locational specifics being indicated by spoken or sung words and acting alone. There is no evidence of the dramatist's feeling any scruple or restriction in changing locations, and this is surely because even then the Chinese theatre was not burdened by any considerations of visual stage decor or furniture, location being suggested, without any visual support, to the audience who then conjured it up in its mind.

From the point of view of Naturalism or even of modern Chinese dramaturgy, such frequent spatial changes are to be avoided, and the following treatment might be employed: the policeman ought to exit and re-enter with the Wang family, in order to keep the location the same. For a Naturalist, such manipulations of space as seen in *Dream of the Butterflies* are hardly imaginable or tolerable. The play might well be subjected to such criticism as: it is not dramatic but narrative, since the playwright has no sense of the Three Unities but changes locales at will like a novelist.

In the next act comes another example. This act is set in the court of Judge Bao, who is preparing for the trial. Falling asleep, he dreams of sauntering in the garden and seeing the butterflies caught in the web. The content of his dream is actually dramatised, so that the locale changes from the court to the garden, and when he wakes up from his

[14] *Dream of the Butterflies*, op. cit., p. 632-3.

dream, the locale suddenly returns to the court. As in the previous example, the possibility of such frequent spatial change is greatly facilitated by the lack of stage furniture. In realistic or Naturalistic works, his dreaming in most cases would be narrated rather dramatised, lest the performance be inconvenienced by the need of moving stage furniture on and offstage. The situation is again the same as for the previous example, with the only difference, if any, that the charge that it is overly narrative can hardly be levelled at it, since it has in fact enacted a scene that could, by many theatrical norms, just as well have been narrated.

Frequent changes of the dramatic venue make heavy realistic stage furniture virtually impossible, while on the contrary a bare stage permits much broader horizons and liberates the playwright from the fetters of time and space and their materialised signs, scenery and stage-furniture. Therefore possible shortcomings caused by the scantiness of stage furniture may be easily compensated for by poetic depiction and appeals to the audience's own imagination. The bare stage is generally supposed to be a key feature of the classical Chinese theatre, but few have attempted to settle the issue of whether it was for the Yuan and other early periods of Chinese drama, since direct evidence is lacking, but direct evidence does not have the monopoly of solidity, and by means of such textual analyses as the above more solid information on the early Chinese stage may well be deducible.

The bareness of the earliest Chinese theatrical stage may be further indicated by *Chalk Circle*. Act Three of this play illustrates the Chinese theatrical concept of space. In this act, the same one venue with, if any, the same stage furniture, stands for two dramatic locales: the inside of the tavern and the mountain road outside. It starts with the Waiter's entry, which defines the space as the tavern house:

ACT THREE

(Enter the Waiter.)
WAITER.
My wine is selling fast,
Which is clean and pure unrivalled.
. . .

Very soon the locale is changed, which is indicated by the entry of new characters:

(Enter two policemen and Crabapple Bloom. Crabapple Bloom falls and gets to her feet.)

RUNNER DONG. I am a well known runner in the Yamen of Zhengzhou. . . . It's snowing even harder! Hurry along now!

CRABAPPLE BLOOM. (Sings.)

Has the snow overhead ever paused for the blink of an eyelid?
The wild wind is blowing madly and
The trees are being destroyed.
I am suffering, worrying,
This journey will certainly exhaust me.
. . .

RUNNER DONG. Hark you, woman! Try harder! You may have a rest when we've passed these hills. . . .[15]

The outside scene takes up much time as Crabapple Bloom sings of the wretched injustice that has been done her, and later bumps into her brother Zhang Lin. They reach the inn, and the stage is then divided into two locales, one indoors and the other outdoors:

ZHANG LIN. . . . I wronged you. There is a tavern ahead, shall we go and have a little drink! (Reaches the tavern with the runners.) Waiter, wine!
(Enter the Waiter.)
WAITER. Yes, yes, yes. Come in, please! [16]

We see here that space or location on an almost certainly bare stage is indicated by non-substantial elements rather than by any hardware of scenery or properties. The bare stage keeps the dramatisation distant from ordinary verisimilitude and destroys any possibility of decor-induced illusions, so that the audience have to work out by their faculty of reasoning where it is that the story is taking place, and this keeps them awake and out of any visually induced entrancement, with the same aim, achieved in a different way, as the V-effect.

The epic theatre, in Brecht's view, is an ideal form for achieving the V-effect and for freeing audiences' critical faculties from emotive infatuations and over-ready preconceptions, or as he himself puts it:

Today when human character must be understood as the 'totality of all the social conditions, the epic form is the only one that can comprehend all the processes, which could serve the drama as materials for a fully representative picture of the world.[17]

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The definition of the theory of epic theatre is somewhat obscure, nor is its employment in theatrical practice particularly clear-cut. What is termed epic theatre employs various methods which may be supposed to have been utilised by the epic for

[15] *Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 1121.
[16] Ibid., p. 1123.
[17] As quoted in Martin Esslin, *Brecht: a choice of evils* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), p. 109.

the purpose of destroying dramatic illusion. According to my understanding, its primary difference from Aristotelian theatre lies in its approach to subject matter. The *epic* is basically narrative, is opposed to the *lyrical* and also differs from the *dramatic*. The lyrical adopts a self-angled point of view to reflect the *ego* directly, and the dramatic adopts **a multitude of angles** each of which is **adjusted to a certain *ego***, while, the epic differentiates itself from both the preceding by taking the view-angle of *the third person*. So in ordinary drama, the understanding spectator is subject to the power of various egos, of **I** -- *the first person*, but if drama reduces its distance from *the epic* and takes over the view-angle of *the third person*, the **I** will be altered into a **He**. This makes it easier to prevent spectators from identifying themselves with any particular character. From this prevention arise such effects as distancing or estrangement, whereby the theatre is made into a kind of ballad house, with the audience watching past events being dramatised on the stage, rather than participating in incidents which are underway in the present, and they acquire the same psychology as they do when listening to an epic narration and watching a ballad-chanter performing. In this way, all members of the audience are kept sober and sufficiently aware of their real identity, instead of losing their self-consciousness. This idea is reflected in Brecht's remarks on the psychology of audiences and actors. Brecht holds that both audience and actors ought to reserve their own *selves* and avoid being entranced, so that the onstage character is *always a third person* to them. He sums up the distinction between conventional drama and his own innovative theatre as follow:

> The spectator of the dramatic theatre says: "Yes, I have felt the same. -- I am just like this. -- This is only natural. -- It will always be like this. -- This human being's suffering moves me, because there is no way out for him. -- This is great art: it bears the mark of the inevitable. -- I am weeping with those who weep on the stage, laughing with those who laugh.
>
> The spectator of the epic theatre says: "I should never have thought so. -- That is not the way to do it. -- This is most surprising, hardly credible. -- This will have to stop. -- This human being's suffering moves me, because there would have been a way out for him. This is great art: nothing here seems inevitable -- I am laughing about those who weep on the stage, weeping about those who laugh."[18]

The actor, in his view, should equally be rational and conscious of his identity and his job of impersonation. To help him stand outside the dramatic infatuation, during rehearsal the actor is asked to translate his text into the reported speech of the third person, thus relating what the character is saying and doing, turning drama into story-telling or epic-narrating

[18] Ibid, p. 115.

Strictly speaking, Brechtian epic theatre is anti-drama, and it seems that he would not have objected to the latter appellation, since he himself claimed that he objected to "the dramatic theatre". Here there is an apparent paradox. Drama should presumably always be drama, but epic theatre is nonetheless to be a venue for drama rather than for an epic. This apparent paradox has evoked a certain scepticism towards his theory in the light of the actual histrionic effects of his stage productions. Epic theatre does in fact "rescue" audiences from the thrall of the magic powers of traditional theatre, but Brecht also employs various means to counteract this dilution of dramatic thraldom.

Narrative is essential to epic theatre, and as Richmond and his colleagues say: "Most fundamental are the spirit and style of the storytelling".[19] According to Brecht, theatre should be likened to a ballad house where past events are being related by the third person rather than dramatised by various first persons. As said before, this idea is overtly anti-dramatic, and moreover, it is impossible to fully translate into practice. But to understand Brecht correctly, we must be aware that what he pursues is a general effect similar to that of the epic, rather than the substitution of the epic for the dramatic. In this sense, his words on the matter cannot be taken literally. On the other hand, although he is not aiming to substitute epic for drama, the technical elements of the epic are inserted into his plays, or, put alternatively, narrative elements play a more important part in epic theatre than in other kinds of theatre. This point is reflected in our play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and coincides with a striking feature of classical Chinese drama.

In the first instance, Brecht endeavours to build up a plausible narrative structure for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. At the end of the prologue, a ballad singer is summoned to sing an old legend of "The Chalk Circle", and the story is recounted just symbolically but almost entirely dramatised. Herein lies hidden the author's artistic deliberation. By this arrangement, the epic atmosphere is conveyed to the audience from the very start, reminding the audience in good time to treat the play as a narrative story from the point of view of an outsider or onlooker.

Strictly speaking, from the structural aspect, the playwright has endowed his play with an epic structure. The singer relates the story of "The Chalk Circle"-- even though the major part of the story is dramatised. In this way, the epic tone is strengthened in a lively manner. The other side of the coin, however, is that such anti-dramatic treatment can never prevent drama from being dramatic. Theoretically, the first scene could be considered as the beginning of the drama's temporal span, but in practice it is still generally regarded as a prologue before the truly dramatic events take place. That is to say, it is still considered to be auxiliary, all the same still an overture, even though the

[19] Farley P. Richmond & others, *Indian Theatre: Traditions of performance* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 463.

playwright himself calls it a prologue and defines it as an "historically elucidatory background". Accordingly, as mentioned, the second scene is normally viewed as the starting point of the plot. [20]

It is not to be regarded as a failure that Epic Theatre has not lost its dramatic marrow, since *the epic* and *the narrative* are only means to the end of producing the V-effect. The prologue is thematically and also technically significant. Apart from building up a narrative structure and reminding the audience to reserve their third-person identity, it provides a wide range of freedom for applying epic techniques to drama, and this brings out qualities similar to those of classical Chinese dramaturgy. Like this play, classical Chinese drama contains a great deal of narrative elements[21].

In both Brecht's play and the two Chinese plays there exist the technical ingredients of "introductory narration", which are usually employed at the very beginning of the play or act. In Chinese plays, the task of narrating is usually carried out by a character in the play, whereas in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* it is done by the Singer, who is outside the dramatic conflict[22].

The Singer, strictly speaking, is never involved in the plot, and he, like the audience, is a third-person. Similarly, it is common to see a character in Chinese drama addressing the audience directly, which can remind the spectators of the real relationship between them and him, between actor and spectator. When this reminding occurs, neither of them is infatuated in the dramatic situation, just as the Singer is not, because when the audience is addressed, the character has temporarily disengaged himself from his fictional dramatic identity and become a sort of announcer or spokesman, so that in this way the theatre adopts the air of lecture hall, information desk or reception room. That is to say, the character ceases to be the character, and what is left onstage is just a speaker, in short, a third person rather than an "I" . In these circumstances, the illusion, if any has been established, is surely destroyed. A typical technique of this kind is that of the character introducing himself and relating the relevant events of the past. For instance, at the very beginning of *Chalk Circle*:

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[20] This is different from "flashback", and the argument is that, the present condition for the flashback should be a kind of outcome of the past, or stand in close association with the past in the light of incidents. However, Brecht's treatment falls outside this category, and it is so aloof from the subject matter that is has been omitted by some editions of this play.

[21] And it contains an equal, if not greater, amount of lyrical elements as well, which could evoke the false judgement that Chinese drama has no drama in it.

[22] Some kinds of traditional Japanese drama also have a very strong narrative function, such as *kōwaka*, but as a matter of fact, this kind of drama oscillates between drama and ballad, and it "may conveniently be termed a drama, but in a limited sense, for it is a staged performance but lacks -- in its form today, at least, -- mimicry and dialogue", and also, "the texts are true ballads". James T. Araki, *The Ballad-Drama of Medieval Japan* (Vermont & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1978), p. 111.

(Enter the Old Woman and Crabapple Bloom, her daughter.)

WOMAN. **I, an old woman, am a native of Zhengzhou. My maiden name is Liu.** I was married to a Mr. Zhang, who died long ago and left me with a son and a daughter. The boy is called Zhang Lin, and he has received some education, and the girl is called Crabapple Bloom. Needless to say, my daughter is beautiful in all ways, and is intelligent and accomplished at playing instruments and chess, calligraphy and painting, singing and dancing -- really versatile. In our family-tree there have been seven generations of mandarin intellectuals, but unfortunately by my generation the family has declined and finds itself in a helpless state. All I can only do is to allow my daughter to sell her beauty for food.

And, there is a rich man nearby, called Squire Ma. He has been to my house several times, and got interested in my girl, and often speaks of marrying her, and she is also happy with the idea of being married to him. Nevertheless, how could I give her up, she being my breadwinner! When she comes, I will have a long and careful discussion with her. It should be no problem!

(Enter Zhang Lin.)

ZHANG LIN. **I am the man called Zhang Lin.** . . .

. . .

(Enter Squire Ma.)

MA. **A humble fellow, I am called Ma, with the forename of Junqing.** For generations my family has resided in Zhengzhou. I began to study Confucianism in my boyhood, and am now learned in history and the authoritative classical canons. Everyone calls me Squire Ma, as I have quite a bit saved by. I am rather romantic, and much inclined to indulge in love. Here there is a top-class singing-girl by the name of Crabapple Bloom . . .[23]

This technique of narrative is not that of soliloquy. Soliloquy exposes the present internal world of the character who does not want to be heard by other characters onstage, and is designed for the audience's ear, whereas the situation in the above passage of *Chalk Circle* is that the character is announcing himself and relating his story directly to the audience. Soliloquy is particular and vivid, whereas the narrative here is generalised and summarising. Soliloquy is a matter of thoughts or emotions of the moment, while the narrative here is of a longitudinal train of facts. The influence of this technique on Brecht is eventually seen at its peak in another play of his, *A Good Woman of Setzuan*:

PROLOGUE

(A street. It is evening. Wang, the water seller, **introduces himself to the audience.**)

Wang. **I sell water here in the city of Setzuan.** It's a difficult business. When water is scarce, I have to go a long way to find any. And when it is plentiful, I am without income. . . .[24]

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[23] Emboldenings mine.

[24] Emboldenings mine; *Two Plays by Bertolt Brecht* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), p. 3.

This monologue covers more than the length of a page. Although similar phenomena can be found in such Roman plays as *A Pot of Gold*, Brecht is obviously much closer to Chinese drama. Again in Act One:

> (A small tobacco store. The store is not as yet completely furnished and has not opened.)
>
> Shen Te (to the audience). **It's now three days since the gods went away.** They said they wanted to pay me for the night's lodging. And when I looked to see what they'd given me, I saw that it was more than a thousand silver dollars. With the money I bought myself a tobacco store. Yesterday I moved in here . . . [25]

> (Below a bridge. The water seller crouches by the river.)
>
> Wang (looking around). Everything's quiet. **It's four days now that I've been hiding out.** They can't find me, because I'm keeping my eyes open. I fled along their road on purpose. On the second day, they passed the bridge, I heard their steps above me. Now they must be a long way off and I'm safe.[26]

In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, however, the task of addressing the audience is assigned to the Singer, which gives a more epic and narrative feel. For example, in Scene Two:

> The Singer (who is seen sitting on the floor in front of his musicians, a black sheepskin cloak round his shoulders, leafing through a small, well-thumbed notebook):
>
> *Once upon a time*
> *A time of bloodshed*
> *When this city was called*
> *The city of the damned*
> *It had a Governor.*
> *His name was Georgi Abashvili*
> *Once upon a time.*
>
> *He was very rich*
> *He had a beautiful wife*
> *He had a healthy child*
> *Once upon a time.*
>
> *No other governor in Grusinia*
> *Had as many horses in his stable*
> *As many beggars on his doorstep*
> *As may soldiers in his service*
> *As may petitioners in his courtyard*
> *Once upon a time.*
>
> *Georgi Abashfili, how shall I describe him?*

[25] Emboldenings mine; ibid, p. 11.
[26] Emboldenings mine; *Two Plays by Bertolt Brecht*, op. cit. , p. 20.

He enjoyed his life:
On Easter Sunday morning
The Governor and his family went to church
Once upon a time. [27]

In this way, the author has created a third person, a story teller, a ballad singer, or epic narrator -- the Singer. This third person is an outsider to the dramatic situation, partaking the performance, but not taking any part in the dramatisation, in contrast to the habits of traditional Chinese drama.

Despite various differences, there is a spiritual communion between Brecht and Chinese drama, which results from the use of narrative. Of course, all kinds of drama are more or less narrative, but all the same *the narrative* in many dramatic contexts is of a loose and metaphorical nature, and it is more precise to say that drama generally narrates its plot by acting or dramatisation. Narrative as our critical term in this discussion is used in a literal, rather than literary, sense, meaning to relate a story, or a part of the story or a section of the plot, orally.

If required, Chinese drama can create a temporary third person out of a character at any time, whereupon he will stop acting and take up the task of narrating, and as soon as this task is fulfilled, he resumes his original status as a character. A similar function is performed by the Singer in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

This temporary third person may talk about something quite irrelevant or even alien to himself as a character, since at this moment he is not so much a character as an actor, but it will be something closely concerning the plot and vital to the audience's understanding. For example, at the very beginning of Act One of *Chalk Circle*:

(Enter Mrs Ma.)
MRS MA.
Although I have very poor looks,
Yet I am always praised as being good at make-up.
What is washed off my face
Is enough for a cosmetics shop.
I am the first wife of Squire Ma. My husband married another woman, called Zhang Crabapple Bloom or something. She has borne a child, which is five now. Hiding the truth from my husband, I have been having an affair with Zhao. . . [28]

When her narrative ceases to focus on the character that she is playing, she seems more a third person and closer to the Singer in Brecht's work. Functioning in a similar manner,

[27] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 149.
[28] *Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 1108-9.

the Singer is afforded many appearances, either at the beginning of an act or anywhere inside the act:

> (Grusha jumps at him to pull him away. He throws her off and again bends over the crib. Looking round in despair, she suddenly sees a big log of wood, seizes it in panic, and hits the Corporal over the head from behind. She quickly picks up the child and dashes off.)
>
> The Singer.
>
> *After her escape from the Ironshirts,*
> *After twenty-two days of wandering*
> *At the foot of the Janga-Tau glacier*
> *From this moment Grusha Vachnadze decided to be the child's mother.*
>
> . . .
>
> Grusha.
>
> *Nobody wants to take you*
> *So I shall have to take you*
>
> . . .
>
> (She has taken off the child's fine linen and wrapped it in a rag.)
>
> The Singer.
>
> *When Grusha Vachnadze, pursued by the Ironshirts*
> *Came to the narrow footbridge of the Easter slope*
> *She sang the song of the rotten bridge*
> *And risked two lives.*
>
> (The wind has risen.) [29]

There are many more examples of this kind in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

Sometimes the narrative can be highly descriptive, depicting the details of what is being dramatised at the moment onstage rather than sketching the past as a background. It has various functions, such as providing detailed explanation to compensate for the insufficiency of theatrical effects, complementing the dramatics with poetic niceties, and meting out logical or emotional assessment of the incidents. For example, in *Dream of the Butterflies*, as Judge Bao's dream is being dramatised, he himself is narrating the same content:

> (Judge Bao sleeps leaning on the table, dreaming.)
>
> JUDGE BAO. I am so worried about cases, how could I get to sleep. I'd like to stroll for relaxation, and it is the rear yard of Kaifeng Court now. Here is a side door. **Let me push it open. Let me see. Oh, what a nice garden! Behold, flowers are blooming, and the spring view is harmoniously beautiful. Amid the clusters of flowers is a pavilion, on which hangs a web, and among the flowers a butterfly flies overhead.** Now it hits the web and gets caught.
>
> *Inwardly Judge Bao feels sad about the butterfly,*
> *Even an insect meets unexpected disaster.*
> *Let alone human beings.*

[29] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., pp. 178-80.

> Well, insects and animals have souls too, and everything has the Buddha Nature. Now a big butterfly is flying over. It rescues the victim and goes away. Alas, another small butterfly comes and hits the web and gets caught. The big one will certainly come to rescue it. How strange! The big one is flying over the flower again and again, but it never comes to rescue the small one, and just flies away. As the Sage said, everyone must be sympathetic. I will rescue it, since it has been deserted![30]

There are various reasons for such descriptive narrative, the most important of which is: that because of the bare stage, scenery, properties and all stage decor and furniture must be conjured up by linguistic and literary indications, to convey images of the pavilion, the side door, the web, the butterflies and so on.[31]

In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, however, all the job of narrating is undertaken by the Singer and his fellow singers, and the dramatic characters are basically confined within the action of the drama, contrasting with the dual function of characters in traditional Chinese drama. For instance, the above quote from *Dream of the Butterflies* operates very similarly to that at the end of Scene Two of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, when what is sung by the Singer is precisely the same as what is dramatised by Grusha. After this, the Singer frequently shows his face, often at the beginning and end of a scene, each scene in this way being conferred with an epic-like narrative structure. Towards the end of this second scene, he performs the same function again. At the same time as Grusha is acting, the Singer sings:

> The Singer.
> *For a long time she sat with the child.*
> *Evening came, night came, dawn came.*
> *Too long she sat, too long she watched*
> *The soft breathing, the little fists*
> *Till towards morning the temptation grew too strong.*
> *She rose, she leaned over, she sighed, she lifted the child*
> *She carried it off.*
> (She does what the singer says as he describes it.)
> *Like booty she took it for herself*
> *Like a thief she sneaked away.* [32]

In the above we feel the supplementary and complementary function of narrative for dramatics and theatrics, and the literary supplementation of dramatisation. In this instance, literature and drama, and poetry and prose, cohabit well so that a similar effect is achieved to that of film. The length of time is indicated and such details as "soft

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[30] *Dream of the Butterflies*, op. cit., pp. 635-6; emboldenings mine.

[31] This is also a piece of textual evidence for the bare stage in classical Chinese theatre, and what is more, it demonstrates the classical Chinese theatrical peculiarity of mixing poeticity and dramatics.

[32] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 165.

breathing" and "the little fists" are descriptively highlighted as if by camera close-up. Through the narrative, we perceive the interdependence of the literary and poetic elements contained in Chinese and Brechtian dramas, and, more importantly, we feel the novel artistic power generated by the organic mixture of the two.

As a result of these techniques, productions by Brecht have still on many occasions succeeded in fiercely agitating audience emotions, and they have in this way retained illusions and entrancements similar to those of the Naturalistic theatre. Such an outcome was outwith Brecht's expectations and annoyed him, causing him to be doubtful as to the correctness and applicability of the concept of epic theatre, and to entertain the idea that it might even simply be a mistaken notion. As we have discussed, while formulating this theory, Brecht received inspiration from Chinese drama, or, to be exact, from the performance of Peking Opera-Drama, and found technical elements of it useful for his epic theatre.[33] That it works for traditional Chinese drama strongly indicates that it is not a theory that can be despaired of out of hand!

It is essential to point out, that although dramatic productions by Brecht never fulfilled his intentions for the V-effect, his theory is still basically correct,[34] and, by contrast, from the opposite standpoint, it would equally be mistaken to assume that Chinese drama, which does contain a certain amount of technical elements conducive to alienation, has very little to do with, or stands very aloof from, such concepts as empathy, audience-hypnotization, illusion, entrancement, and so on.

Strictly speaking, what actually appealed to Brecht was the classical Chinese concept of theatre as conveyed by the performance of Peking Opera-Drama, and it was mainly in this limited sphere, that of acting, that Brecht found what he so earnestly desired, while other facets of Chinese traditional drama, such as the textual ones, were largely overlooked by him or simply not easily available to him. Correspondingly, his idea of the V-effect focused on the theatrical side, acting, performing and directing, rather than the textual side, very much the same course taken by the Russians' enthusiastic

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[33] Owing to its representiveness and high virtuosity, Peking Opera-Drama is often subconsciously supposed to stand for classical Chinese drama as a whole. Although scholars have been aware of the problem, Peking Opera-Drama is still the overwhelmingly major topic in the discussion of classical Chinese theatre, as, for instance, Scott: "The description Classical Theatre of China could be used to mean a variety of dramatic forms and developments, but in this book it refers to the *ching hsi*, or Peking drama." See A. C. Scott, *The Classical Theatre of China* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 15.

[34] "Brecht and Benjamin were *theoretically* correct in believing that the new technology would radically alter the production and reception of art," says Elizabeth Wright: "but they were over-optimistic in hoping for the desired political effect. The relation between work and audience did not change in the way they foresaw." E. Wright, *Postmodern Brecht: A re-presentation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 87.

response to Mei Lanfang's acting[35]. That such was his approach is corroborated by his article entitled *Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting*, based on his experience of attending Mei Lanfang's performance. As for the relationship between traditional Chinese theatre and his own, he says:

> The following is intended to refer briefly to the use of the alienation effect in traditional Chinese acting. This method was most recently used in German for plays of a non-Aristotelian (not dependent on empathy) type as part of the attempts being made to evolve an epic theatre. The efforts in question were directed to playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance and rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious.[36]

Brecht believes that, the main reason why Chinese acting has attained the V-effect is that the actor needs a minimum of illusion and is not entranced, so that thus the audience may accordingly be kept sober and alert. His explanation of the causality rings true. Traditional Chinese theatre-goers see the acting of the performers rather than real deeds of historical figures, so that for them the theatre is basically a place of entertainment, and rarely considered as a second reality on the plane of hallucination.[37]

Brecht is right when he feels the strong V-effect in Chinese theatre and highlights the contribution of acting to such an effect, but he overestimates the significance of acting and overlooks other relevant aspects. He confines his considerations of Chinese theatre within a mono-technical circle, largely leaving out the various other references to it, such as the social, cultural, historical, aesthetic and psychological, although he, somewhat curiously for its one-sidedness, is fully aware of the far-reaching political significance of transporting the Chinese kind of acting to the German stage. He seems to think it purely incidental and not worth investigation that the Chinese have traditionally used the V-effect in their acting, as if it were maybe merely a matter of whimsical free choice and random subjective preference. On the technical plane, he believes that the Chinese habit can easily be grafted onto the theatre of his country; concerning which he remarks pointedly: "It is not entirely easy to realise that the Chinese actor's A-effect is a

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[35] See Gao Mang, *"Mei: Xie zai woguo jingju dashi Mei Lanfang Xiansheng danchen 100 zhounian-zhiji"*, Peking *Renmin ribao haiwaiban*, Nov. 3nd, 1994, p. 7.

[36] John Willett (ed. & trans.), *Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic*, translated and with notes by John Willett (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.), 1964, p. 91.

[37] Chinese audiences, at least in olden times, often entered heart and mind into the spirit of plays, but all the same, in a way quite different from the entrancement that Brecht opposes. The approach of the former was the full appreciation of the totality of theatrical values such as music, singing, acting and so on, while the latter is of the identification of theatre and reality. In the former case, the spectator may be absorbed with the theatre but remain outside the drama, but in the latter, he loses his identity in the incidents dramatised.

transportable piece of technique: a concept that can be prised loose from the Chinese theatre; . . . at first sight this superb art seems to offer nothing applicable to a realistic and revolutionary theatre."[38]

In actual fact, acting, even if viewed from a technical angle, develops and exists in organic accordance with all other theatrical concepts as one whole. In this sense, its form is generally not a matter of free choice, but the result of objective demands of a systemic complex of dramaturgy, or the product of a task prescribed by a general cultural legacy and historical conditions, subject to the national temperament and artistic fashions. That is to say, acting style, like other stylistic factors, is determined by particular aesthetic attitudes and dramaturgical outlook, which alloy all kinds of technical and spiritual elements in harmony. First of all, Chinese acting, which is symbolic, expressive, somewhat expressionistic, dance-like, rhythmic, employing a broad complexity of different kinds of artistry and availing itself of the technique of open exaggeration, has always been in perfect harmony with its material environmental elements, such as the bare stage, the loosely defined performing area, the tea-house theatre or the open-air venue, natural lighting, noisy audiences, and relaxed festive atmospheres.[39] Secondly, its characteristics are in accord with the quality of its literature and the nature of its texts. For instance, since the dialogue is often highly poetic, the speech is often recitative and musical, the loudness of recitation and singing in turn satisfying the requirements of the usually noisy audiences. For another example, the identities of frequently changed locations and scenic information need on a bare stage to be made clear by employing expansive modes of delivery, expressive exaggeration and the clarity and succinctness of well-known symbolisms. All these ingredients, technical or conceptual, are interlaced overtly or covertly with each other. For instance, the bare stage needs symbolic and expressive stage props, and this kind of prop in turn fits the symbolic acting and exaggerated gestures. Finally, the text generally consists of an abundance of songs, and therefore the arias are naturally accompanied by dance-like gestures or even pure dance, and this dance-like acting further calls for musical and rhythmic speech.

Acting is not the only way to achieve the V-effect, but it is the most direct and obvious medium for bridging the gap between audience and stage. In view of this, small

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[38] Ibid, p. 95.

[39] Cf. A. C. Scott's account: "The first impression of any visitor to a traditional Chinese theatre was one of unbridled noise which assaulted the ear from every direction. The audience laughed and talked, vendors wandered to and fro selling melon seeds, peanuts and serving tea. Attendants hurled hot towels across the heads of the audience to be dexterously caught by their companions on the opposite side of the house." See A. C. Scott, *The Theatre of Asia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), p. 150.

This situation has not changed very much in some cases even nowadays; cf. Shen Hongguang, *Duan-wu xiang-xi*, in *Hubei duanpianxiaoshuo niankan: 1982* (Wuhan: Changjiang Wenyi Chubanshe, 1983), p. 299.

wonder that Brecht was so sensitive and alert to the spells of acting. However, it is precisely on this point that the weaknesses in his theoretical formulation are exposed. Because he was not sufficiently aware of the deeper reasons beneath the acting style, he became facilely optimistic about the feasibility of transporting Chinese acting with its strong V-effect onto the German stage and transforming it into "epic theatre".

It is arguable that Brecht, while fully realising what historical and political significance the V-effect could have for German theatre, made a grave error at the same time in overlooking the deeper cultural strata that underlay Chinese acting. He opined that the V-effect was principally suited for historicizing the incidents portrayed and in a way which opposed "the bourgeois theatre" which "emphasised the timelessness of its object", advocated the eternal humanity, and created a universal situation that would "allow Man with a capital letter to express himself: man of every period and every colour."[40]

Since it was not then easy to import Chinese or Asiatic acting, Brecht also resorted to other techniques. He said: "The A-effect was achieved not only by actors, but also by the music (choruses, songs) and the setting (placards, film etc.)."[41] This remark overlaps to a certain extent with concepts of Chinese theatrics. Chinese theatre achieves the V-effect via various routes, too. Drama musicians may be left in full view of the audience, and stage hands may come onstage to openly hand over properties or build a temporary setting. Although the theatrical conditions of the Yuan dynasty are not clear, by reading the texts closely, we can know that a similar situation may well have existed. The following is a piece of textual evidence from *Dream of the Butterflies*. According to the stage direction, the actor portraying the character of the old man Wang, who has just been killed, should actually **stand** up of his own accord and **walk** offstage.[42] Even though the text of this play was, as far as we know, first published during the Ming

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[40] John Willett (ed. & trans.), *Brecht on Theatre*, op. cit., pp. 96-7.

[41] Ibid., p. 96.

[42] Chinese drama in later times developed unrealistic elements, as typified by the physical contact between the actors in the course of their acting and stage-hands who protrude into the play to serve the actor or provide properties in the full view of the audience. "The indispensable property man is the greatest obstacle to realism. He is generally attired in his everyday habit and walks to and fro among fantastically costumed players. . . . when a player has some long lines to recite, or has just finished a speech, he quietly presents to him or her a cup of tea to ease the throat. . . . In hot weather, when the costume is rather thick, he fans the wearer incessantly. . . . on a Western stage this would be impossible!" See S. I. Hsiung, the Preface to *Lady Precious Stream: An old Chinese play done into English according to its traditional style* (London: Metheun & Co. Ltd., 1936), p. xvii. It is difficult to prove whether the same was true of the Yuan stage, but it is perfectly possible since, for example, a dead character, as we know from surviving stage directions, could stand up and walk off of his own accord. It is similar to what Karl Immermann, successful playwright of Young Germany in the 1930s, cultivated in the production of his works, as Londré says: "The prompter, when needed, was inaudible to spectators." See Felicia Hardison Londré, *The History of World Theatre, From the English Restoration to the present* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1991), p. 288.

dynasty (1368-1644), it is a reliable indicator of at least fairly early theatre attitudes and practices.

Brecht used similar stage techniques to those just mentioned. For example, in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the Singer and musicians are in full view of the audience, which bears clear resemblance to Chinese theatre. Opposed to using artificial lighting to create a particular atmosphere and mood, he insisted that the source of the light should be visible to the audience. He also advocated that the elements of the story should be able to be separated into fairly independent sections, in order to prevent the audience from imperceptibly merging with the plot, this idea also being found in some larger traditional Chinese plays, the *chuanqi,* which consist of many shortish self-sufficient acts, each of which, incidentally, could be taken out and staged independently. Apart from these, he utilised other means such as chorus, placards and film for the same purpose. It made sense for Brecht to find a broader way to his destination of creating the V-effect, for all his enthusiasm for the Chinese acting style. In actual fact, "Asiatic acting" was not as accessible to him as he imagined, since it cannot, at least not easily, survive out of its native theatrical and general cultural soil. The V-effects in Brechtian works were mainly due to techniques other than acting alone.

Owing to the difficulties of importing and transplanting Chinese acting into his epic theatre, Brecht did not achieve the V-effect to so high a degree as he expected. All the same, his theory of alienation was a logically effective one, which his experiments partly confirmed.

By comparison with the Naturalistic drama of Brecht's times, traditional Chinese drama, while embodying obvious uses of the V-effect, nevertheless had the opposite kind of elements which should not be neglected in any analysis of that drama's theatrical qualities.

Chinese traditional drama is assimilative or appropriative as well as alienating. For instance, the poetic elements of it work in practice on emotion rather than rationality, and the lyricism that is a striking feature of it has strong powers for assimilating the audience and making them all identified with the only "I" onstage, the character uttering the lyricism. In support of this tendency, singing in traditional Chinese plays undermines the V-effect, the opposite effect to that of the chorus in Greek drama. The causes for this difference are, firstly, that the words of the songs in Chinese drama are basically subjective and lyrical, whereas in Greek drama they are much more objective and commentorial. Secondly, the singing in traditional Chinese theatre is mainly solo rather than chorus, and the individual spectator finds it in general easier to enter into the heart of solo singing and identify with the singer, whereas choral or unison singing tends to encourage the audience to view content from a more detached and general point of view.

Being absorbed in the solo singing, the listener is in effect also singing, mentally or with kinaesthesia or even audibly, and, simultaneously, he is in doing so partly identifying with the character and assuming the physical and spiritual position of the singer. The general possibility of this silent or semi-silent singing synchronically with the singer on the stage is supported by the fact that in modern times theatre-goers have often been seen even to sing aloud along with stage performances, and that such behaviour was until recent decades viewed as perfectly normal and acceptable. Furthermore, the tonal and musical qualities of traditional Chinese theatrical singing are characteristically emotional, its melodies often being based on, or making use of, the pitch-tones of the language, and thus imparting a feeling of close affinity to the real spoken language and ordinary emotions.[43] We should note in this respect that, although such musical qualities are actually far removed from naturalism, they still readily evoke empathy and facilitate audience identification with characters onstage, reminding us also that illusion is not a patent of naturalism. Even the acting of traditional Chinese drama has a less strong V-effect than Brecht estimated. Brecht holds that the Chinese actor's object is to appear strange and often surprising to the audience, so that as a result everything presented by him has a touch of the amazing.[44] This is not true. Chinese acting techniques are highly conventional, and therefore they are very familiar and close to the experienced audience, rather than strange and distant; and even for the ordinary audience, the codes of the symbolic acting's can be deciphered without real difficulties. Because of this, even if Chinese acting has as strong a V-effect as Brecht imagined, such effect has nothing whatever to do with "strangeness", the strangeness being in the mind of Brecht not in that of the Chinese audience[45]. On this point, his problem was once again caused by his overlooking the long cultural tradition and deep underlying native artistic strata of Chinese acting. From this point of view, we can see that, even if Chinese acting could have been transported to his epic theatre, it would not necessarily have worked in the same way as it did in China. He himself indeed cites an example of the cultural difference as follows:

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[43] Concerning this, Elizabeth Wichmann says on Peking drama: "Performers compose specific melodies for each melodic-passage to establish clearly **the speech-tone** and therefore the meaning of each written-character, and to express musically their interpretation of nuances of dramatic character and **the specific emotional content** of the lyrics." Emboldenings mine. See "Individual Melodic-passage Composition", in her *Listening to Theatre: The aural dimension of Beijing opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), p. 144.

[44] Cf. *Brecht on Theatre*, op. cit., p. 92.

[45] When talking about the Chinese play *Lady Precious Stream*, Martin Brown says: "Oriental drama and dance depend for much of their effect upon symbols which the audience recognizes and accepts, sharing them with the actors, and the Western audience, meeting the symbols and the actors for the first time, has to be taught to do the same." Introduction to *Lady Precious Stream*, Penguin Plays, edited by E. Martin Brown (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), p. 8.

> When Mei Lan-fang was playing a death scene a spectator sitting next to me exclaimed with astonishment at one of his gestures. One or two people sitting in front of us turned round indignantly and sshhh'd. They behaved as if they were present at the real death of a real girl. Possibly their attitude would have been all right for a European production, but for a Chinese it was unspeakably ridiculous. In their case the A-effect had misfired."[46]

This just goes to show that Mei Lanfang's impersonation had exercised the same effect as did the naturalism that Brecht was averse to.

Strictly speaking, what excited Brecht directly was not the V-effect nature of Chinese acting, but the latter's obvious distance from reality. This causes the effect of an unfamiliarity, which should not be viewed as synonymous with the V-effect, and which is not typically Brechtian, but universal in the arts. What the epic theatre aims at is the detachment from emotion in order to free the critical senses and reasoning faculties, and whether the presentation stands distant or keeps closer to the model is not of essential consequence.[47]

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We have discussed the techniques at great length, because there is a major question to be asked, that of why Brecht chose the chalk circle story for his principal dramaturgical experiment, which indeed has surely been the principal modern dramaturgical experiment of the West and the world as a whole. The answer is surely that the theme itself was viewed by him as being of an importance commensurate with his technical innovations. That theme is the theme of love, than which there is no more vital topic to be had in human existence, as its prevalence alone emphatically confirms, and in dealing with love it treats of that crucial form of consanguineous affection as opposed to acquired affection. Brecht, as recounted at the beginning of this chapter, maintained an enduring delight in the story of the chalk circle as a literary motif, and therefore endowed it with various literary forms and developed it in a different and innovatory direction.

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[46] *Brecht on Theatre*, op. cit., p. 95.

[47] Willett says: "It [the V-effect] is a matter of detachment, of reorienation: exactly what Shelley meant when he wrote that poetry 'makes familiar objects to be as if they were not familiar', or Schopenhauer when he claimed that art must show 'common objects of experience in a light that is at once clear and unfamiliar'." See John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: a study from eight aspects* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 179. In this connection, Peter Brooker points out the other side of the same coin: "But if there is no distinction between these earlier writers, or between them and Brecht, then presumably there is none either between Brecht's *Verfremdung* and Ezra Pound's adopted dictum 'make it new', or between these writers and any other who 'help us to see thing afresh'." See his *Bertolt Brecht: Dialectics, poetry, politics* (London, New York & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 68.

Like the story of Solomon, the story of the chalk circle conveys wisdom or one aspect of possible wisdom about the most fundamental of human attributes, love, and it is this that appeals so greatly to people. It is important to point out, that such or possible wisdom as is found in this play has two different values, that of its ideas and that of its artistry. As for its value, in the realm of ideas, the wisdom proffered is that of genius, insight, deep discernment and acumen, moral fulfillment, ontological consummation, all of which are very much dependent on that basic quality, a sense of justice and morality, which as meant in this context is a highly complex and philosophical concept, so that the wisdom meant is very like the *zhi*, "wisdom" or "wisdom and morality as an inseparable entity", in the sense that Confucius used the word.[48] As for the artistic value, wisdom is not purely defined in terms of IQ, but must be a highly moral and dignified quality, and must also embrace the concomitant aesthetic perfection, exquisiteness, delicacy, subtlety, talent and so on which, on the other hand, constitute a major facet of the virtuosity.

The crucial wisdom in *Chalk Circle* evokes sudden and abundant delight. Although the scene of the circle is quite short and set surprisingly near the end of the play, it occasions what might be called a sudden enlightenment, the Zen term *dunwu,* in the audience, all at once throwing startlingly clear light on all the complications and suspense that have preceded it. In a trice, the latent subtlety, finesses and wonders of the theme and its evolution are all revealed, and the audience's faculties of comprehension are suddenly elevated into a higher realm as they share the wisdom of the character, and this sudden enlightenment is accompanied by the natural corresponding sudden delight, since understanding, in spite of many superficial appearances to the contrary, has surely been one of the principal aspirations of the human species since it first began. On the one hand, in the realm of ideas this dénouement enriches our knowledge and imparts moral education to us, and on the other, in the realm of artistry, it provides us with great spiritual pleasure and aesthetic intoxication as we appreciate the subtleties of composition, the clever design of the plot, the genius of the dramatic construction, and the wit and humour of the dialogue, all of which contribute to a kind of aesthetic joy. In this sense, the artistic quality of the play depends very much on this crucial moment of enlightenment, and its artistic value can not be realised until this final moment of great wisdom. And great wisdom has to concern some great issue, and that great issue is love.

This analysis is also applicable to *Dream of the Butterflies.* To begin with, the primacy of consanguinity in the relationship between the mother and sons is taken for granted, then the audience's doubts and equivocality are aroused by the question of who should be chosen as the principal offender. Later when the youngest boy is given up, he

[48] There are many references to *zhi* in *Lunyu*. See e.g., ch. 4 / sect. 2; ch. 5 / sect. 21; ch. 9 / Sect. 29; and ch. 15 / sect. 8. Also cf. *Daode jing*, ch. 33.

is first considered possibly to be an adopted son, but this mistaken assumption is abruptly rectified by the truth that he is the mother's own flesh-and-blood. This play also has its wisdom or aspect of possible wisdom, this being of a kind that is not the property of any individual character in particular, but of the play as a whole. A way of comprehending this might be the following. Our relative ignorance and lack of prior consideration of the problem posed suggests the potential wisdom of the play, which after all has somehow or other to wisely resolve the problem it poses, or at least so one would in general suppose. We cannot, however, perceive the whole of its wisdom until there has been a sudden encapsulating revelation of it, at which time, morality, righteousness and truth are suddenly comprehended as a coherent unit, and we are thereby afforded the same pleasure as in the case of *Chalk Circle*.

Brecht's affinity to the motif of this play has similar reasons. It is all said and done mightily about love, that thematic zenith. This point can be confirmed by his analyses of the relationship between the educational function and the entertainment function of his epic theatre. The early Brecht is thought to have ignored the artistically entertaining function of drama, as Martin Esslin points out:

> Brecht proclaims his conviction that the theatre has to be strictly didactic: he saw it as his task "to develop the article of consumption into a teaching aid and to refashion certain institutions from places of entertainment into organs of information".[49]

Later Brecht recognised the claims of entertainment, so he defined this concept anew, but still confined it mainly to the aspect of conveying edifying knowledge and information. He still repudiated the notion of emotional entertainment through catharsis and insisted on the importance of resorting to one's critical faculties for the making of logical and morally correct judgements. "Let us treat the theatre as a place of entertainment", he said, "But let us inquire what kind of entertainment we regard as acceptable."[50] He had held that the pleasure conveyed by epic theatre could be likened to that when we acquire new knowledge or make a scientific discovery. Eventually he was to approach the matter the other way round. The organs of information were to be developed back into entertainment, although for him personally there was ultimately no true distinction between edification and the stimulation of pleasure in its highest form. Concerning this, Martin Esslin adds:

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[49] Martin Esslin, *Brecht: a choice of evils* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), p. 112.
[50] Ibid.

> For Brecht, whose own curiosity and thirst for knowledge were boundless, regarded the "instinct of inquiry as a social phenomenon not less pleasurable, nor less imperious, than the instinct of procreation".[51]

These ideas of Brecht's could be open to doubt, even regarded as inconsistent, but they have strong claims to validity or at least part-truth. As a matter of fact, such ideas of his on entertainment had existed in embryo as early as before 1936 (even 1935), when in his *Theatre for Pleasure and Theatre for Instruction* he argued:

> Generally there is felt to be a very sharp distinction between learning and amusing oneself. . . . Well, all that can be said is that the contrast between learning and amusing oneself is not laid down by divine rule; it is not one that has always been and must continue to be.[52]
>
> . . .
>
> Theatre remains theatre even when it is instructive theatre, and in so far as it is good theatre it will amuse.[53]

In the same article, he talked about the relationship between theatre and knowledge:

> We know that knowledge can be amusing, but not everything that is amusing belongs in the theatre. . . .
>
> . . .
>
> Whatever knowledge is embodied in a piece of poetic writing has to be transmuted into poetry. Its utilization fulfils the very pleasure that the poetic element provokes.[54]

And:

> The epic theatre was likewise often objected to as moralizing too much. Yet in the epic theatre moral arguments only took second place. Its aim was less to moralize than to observe. That is to say **it observed, and then the thick end of the wedge followed**: the story's moral.[55]

From the foregoing, we can readily see why the chalk circle was an ideal motif for him.

The scene of the chalk circle in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* functions in the same way as in the Chinese play. It reveals wisdom or apparent wisdom, and such wisdom does not belong to a certain character here either, as the muddle-headed Azdak is really so confused that he thinks Grusha to be the mother in the biological sense:

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[51] Ibid.

[52] *Brecht on Theatre*, edited and translated by John Willett (London: Eyre Menthuen, 1973), p. 72.

[53] Ibid., p. 73.

[54] Ibid., p. 74.

[55] Emboldenings mine, ibid., p. 75.

(The two women take up positions again.)
Azdak. Pull!
(Again Grusha lets go of the child.)
Grusha in despair: I've brought him up! Am I to tear him to pieces? I can't do it!
Azdak (rising). And in this manner the Court has established the true mother. (To Grusha:) Take your child and be off with it. . . . (To the Governor's wife:) And you disappear before I fine you for fraud.[56]

The wisdom here seems to be a thing of Nature and omnipotence, stemming from the very sources of all justice. It is of necesssity, as Confucius says: "Noble wisdom and mean stupidity can never be changed."[57] Even such a foolish judge in his superficiality and stupidity does in the end produce justice and a happy outcome, his wisdom, as the saying goes, having an appearance of stupidity,[58] his subtlety, as Laozi says, appearing awkward, and his integrity corrupt.[59] By this are revealed the decisive ethical elements in wisdom, matching with Lyons statement: "The sense of reason and compassion implicit in Azdak's justice makes his misrule a model of goodness unapproached by the previous plays."[60] In the following scene, moreover, he is the catalyst for another perfectly just and desirable solution. Instead of granting an old couple the divorce that they are seeking, he divorces Grusha from her husband by signing the wrong certificate, thus yet further heightening the perfection of the happy ending:

(Using the Judge's seat as a table, he writes something on a piece of paper and prepares to leave. Dance and music start.
Shauva (having read what is on the paper:) But that's not right. You haven't divorced the old couple. You've divorced Grusha from her husband.
Azdak. Have I divorced the wrong ones? I'm sorry, but it'll have to stand. I never retract anything.[61]

The "chalk circle" scene in Brecht's play also provides sudden enlightenment. It is a moralising allegory that is philosophically revelative, giving the audience an acute insight into a complex of various concepts such as human nature, blood bonds, motherly love and love in general. The revelation does indeed have a strong potential for evoking pleasure in the audience, even if only provisionally for those who might on general reflection or because of some long-held alternative viewpoint not entirely concur with the

[56] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 235.
[57] See *Lunyu*, ch. 17, Sect. 3.
[58] "Great wisdom is like foolishness (*Dazhi ruo yu*)."
[59] *Daode jing*, ch. 45. This chapter is about the art of ruling a country and its people; as Zhang Mo says: "If you rule the world with it, everything gets its proper place (*wanwu ge de qi suo*)". Zhang Mo, *Lao Zi Daode jing* (Hong Kong: Changdao Chubanshe, 1985), p. 121.
[60] Charles R. Lyons, *Bertolt Brecht*, op. cit., pp. 144-5.
[61] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, op. cit., p. 236.

solution, and this pleasure interacts with and supplements the other pleasurable attractions of the play, its exciting story, singing, acting and so forth. It is worth noting emphatically that the revelation and enlightenment in thematic terms subtly results in enjoyment and delight, so that this play is cited as a typical example to show how Brecht later paid attention to the entertaining function of his theatre, for example:

> The myriad of aesthetic knots introduced deliberately by the playwright-director to offset scenic division as to eliminate breaks between dialogue and song, indicate how far the later Brecht had departed from the earlier theory. The pleasure of the spectator (the guiding principle of the 1948 *Short Organum*) and the pure aesthetic satisfaction that the later Brecht sought and found in the theatre, seemed to have played a greater role here than the early theory with its discrete parts, its anti-aesthetic bias, and its theoretically calm and largely unmoved spectator.[62]

And also:

> Lastly, it is worth remembering that the *Chalk Circle* was the last of his own plays that Brecht was to direct completely, before his death in 1956. For these reasons it might be argued that the text of the *Chalk Circle* and Brecht's production of that text tells us perhaps more about the style of the mature Brecht and Brecht's practical, working relationship to his early theory than any other play we might choose to examine.[63]

But unfortunately, sometimes the ideological and educational side as the source for the artistic pleasure is ignored, and the latter is thought a negation of the former, for example:

> The fact that the later Brecht was much more sympathetic to drama along Aristotelian lines, and apparently far less concerned with teaching lessons in dramatic form, is germane to the reason he began in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* to dispense with stylistic elements associated with the Lenz-Brecht tradition.[64]

The revelation is indeed a pleasure which interacts with pleasures from other sources. The entertainment of this scene is related to information and understanding, which corroborates Brecht's idea quoted above. The pleasure also partly comes from the deepened understanding and further realisation of the dramatic theme of universal love. In this regard, similar understanding has been provided but from another angle of Brechtian narrative disposition:

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[62] John Fuegi, "Diary of a Production: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*", in his *Bertolt Brecht: chaos, according to plan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.165.

[63] John Fuegi, as quoted in *Brecht: Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* by J. M. Ritchie (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1976), p. 48.

[64] Max Spalter, *Brecht's Tradition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 196.

> This story, too, moves forward concisely and in a straight line, so that when Azdak and Grusha come together in the final scene, there is a shock of realization that has a genuinely magical effect: all that, one can only feel with wonder, to bring about this. It is a moment of absolute delight.[65]

The entertainment provided by this particular scene is in the nature of information and understanding, chiming with Brecht's aspiration quoted above. Like its Chinese counterpart, this scene too is redolent with artistry, supplying consummation, perfect happy ending, harmonious rounding-off, humour, subtlety and so on, thus calling forth a special artistically induced enjoyment that is mixed with the pleasure of intellectual perception and spiritual happiness. This artistic appeal can never be appreciated unless the brief momentary scene of the testimony by the chalk circle is considered within the stream of the whole development of incidents, unless it is located in the enduring chain of conflict, before and after it. This is the realization of his "utopian wish to produce an audience who would rejoice at the contradictions of a necessarily estranged world -- the uncanniness of a world in flux, the constant shifting of figure and ground in a dialectical movement."[66]

The foregoing arguments account for the great charm of "the chalk circle" as a literary motif, one to which Brecht was attracted not only by its technical potential but

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[65] Jan Needle & Peter Thomson, *Brecht* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 205.

[66] Elizabeth Wright, *Postmodern Brecht: A re-presentation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 52. Brecht's ideas on the entertainment function of his epic theatre is commonly considered to be a change of his mind and an unwilling alteration to maintain his logical consistence, and to be unfeasible and impractical. All the same, this play justifies this theoretical formulation of his. Wright also quotes the following words from Brecht which can be testified to and justified by this play: "The theatre of the scientific age is in a position to make dialectics into a source of enjoyment. The unexpectedness of logically progressive or zigzag development, the instability of circumstance, the joke of contradictions and so forth: all these are ways of enjoying the liveliness of men, things and processes, and they heighten both our capacity for life and our pleasure in it." See ibid. It is not right to define the "dialectical theatre" in utilitarian-political terms as a "didactic theatre" which stimulates socialist revolution against the capitalist society, and as a matter of fact, audiences in both the opposite kinds of society appreciate his plays. Cf. Paul Binnerts: "The didactic theatre [such as Brechtian theatre] can play a very important role, as demonstrated in China during the Great Cultural Revolution. . . . Just before his death in 1956, Brecht said that the most important function of future theatre lay in the didactic theatre. Behind this lies the idea of permanent revolution and permanent education. This is true, however, for revolutionary communities. In the capitalistic countries, the cultural strongholds must first be levelled." "Theatre and Politics: A manifesto", in Liber Amicorum Benjamin Hunningher (edit.), *Essays on Drama and Theatre* (Amsterdam: / Baarn Moussault's Uitgeverij bv Antwerpen Standaard Uitgevij, 1973), p. 26.

also by its philosophical value and aptness for the revelation of profound wisdoms. At the very core of the themes of these three plays indeed lie the attraction and essentiality of the supreme theme of love, without which human life would be, as is commonly accepted, a poor thing indeed, and it is this theme that so magnificently inspired the playwrights for them to provide it with dramatic structures, techniques and treatments commensurate with its great importance.

CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

The history of human society, along with that of its literature and arts, has incessantly reminded us of the significance of love, in particular love between the sexes which greatly honours their physical communication[1]. Almost every epoch-making social transformation has been accompanied by an alteration in attitudes to love. In European history, for instance, Classical times, Medieval times, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and contemporary society, each period has clearly been coloured by their notions concerning love. The seemingly slow pace of change in Chinese love attitudes during dynastic times was due to the apparently leisurely tempo of change in the highly durable traditional society, and this apparent tempo may have obscured just how sensitive were the interactions between love and Chinese society. Nonetheless, since the downfall of imperial Chinese social structures, the rapid acceleration in the movement of history has helped to shed illumination on such interactions.

The Revolution of 1911 stimulated the New Culture Movement, one of the most vital parts of which was the emancipation of the individual, characterised by the liberation of attitudes towards love and sexuality. Another example of great change occurred when China's fate had partly fallen into the hands of the Communists centred in Yan'an, and people there adopted a starkly nihilistic attitude toward the legacy of traditional Chinese views of sexual relationships, conceptions of chastity and virtue and so on, being radically rejected as "feudal" ideas.[2] Sexual freedom was greatly encouraged, while love was degraded to the level of *needs*, political and biological. By this definition, chaste love was to be sacrificed if the course of revolution so required,

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[1] Cf. Ìlham Dilman: "Sex is thus a form of affective body-language in terms of which one makes contact and communicates with the person who rouses one's interest, curiosity, tenderness, or who baits, taunts or challenges one in a special way which needs articulation. But the person who speaks it does not always say the same thing, does not always seek the same thing. In that sense sex has no specific content of its own; . . . One could also see it as a form of play. It needs not involve any commitment and can bring into play almost any part of the person in his responses to the other. / When, in contrast, it is an expression of *love*, the person in love is happy to stay with what he discovers." See Ílham Dilman, "Conflicting Aspect of Sexual Love: Can they be reconciled?" in *Love and Human Separateness* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), p. 91.

[2] Cf. Feng Fengming, *Kuangbiao shidai* (English title: *Behind the Scenes at Yen An*), edited by Wen Han (Hong Kong: Xinchao Chubanshe, n.d., c. 1967).

and political theory placed carnal pleasure above spiritual consummation.[3] This point is further illustrated by the situation prevailing after the founding of the People's Republic, when love, along with other categories of human feelings, was repressed and traditional *pudeur* resumed. This turn-about was a foretaste of the full onset of totalitarian rule. The turmoil of the Cultural Revolution produced unmistakable dominant attitudes towards love. A new asceticism was created by the new religion of Maoism, political harshness and austerity were substituted for the tenderness of humane affection, and it was demanded that sexual admiration be replaced by the worship of charisma. Whilst the Chinese heritage of sex-culture was discarded, among the political aristocracy a hypocrisy was practised that was typified by the quasi-emperor, and imperial concubinage was restored in disguised forms.[4] Then this new asceticism died away with the regime that fostered it, and history eventually witnessed another emancipation of love after those ten years of havoc. This emancipation was also one that synchronised with the step of the new epoch.

From the above, we may see that the mood of the times is often, if not always, revealed through the prevailing concept of love, and that this mood takes active form in the general behaviour of the men and women of the times. Human history often marches parallel to ideas of personal romance. The central importance of love has in modern times frequently been subjected to brutal repudiation by the Chinese authorities, but the great effort expended in trying to repudiate it has in itself provided objective proof of the truth of love's power.[5]

The thesis of love's centrality may be, and has been, given various modes of expression, both by individuals and collective groups, and is a commonplace view both East and West, in both ancient and modern times. For instance, the prime ancient

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[3] Cf. Ma Fu-yao (Ma Fuyao), chs. 1, 2 & 4, *Mao-xifu neizhuan* (Hong Kong: Ziyou Chubanshe [official English name: Freedom Press], 1953), and Feng Fengming, *Kuangbiao shidai*, op. cit., passim.

[4] Cf. Harrison E. Salisbury, "The Secret Life of Zhongnanhai", in his *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng: A dual biography* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), pp. 45-79, passim, and W. J. F. Jenner, "Emperors and Bureaucrats", in his *The Tyranny of History* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 39-41.

[5] Love often acts a latent threat and challenge to political rigidity. This point has been testified to by two recent interlaced campaigns in China, in the post 1976 New Period, one being the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalisation of 1981 and the other the Elimination of Spiritual Pollution of 1983. The former is obviously charged with political import, but the latter, however, sets sex and love as its main target. These double edged implications of both were shortly afterwards combined in another campaign entitled Criticising Bourgeois Humanitarianism.

Chinese classic on ritual and conduct, produced over two thousand years ago, *Li Ji* (*Codes of Social Rituals*, usually called *Book of Rites*) couches its viewpoint as, "Food and sex are the primary desires of mankind (*Yinshi nannü, ren-zhi dayu-yan*)", and this statement resonates so many centuries later with the recent prevailing confluence of Marxian economics and Freudian sexual psychology, the former defining human beings in terms of economy, and the latter in terms of sex. Love is indeed often or always "what makes the world go round", or as Dante puts it in the final line and most resounding position of his major work: "It is love that moves the sun and the other stars (*L'Amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle*)."[6] This may be comprehended either as a metaphorical platitude, or understood as a strictly academic proposition. In the first sense, that of psychology, love is by far the most significant, magnificent and disturbing element in the human psyche. In the genetic sense, it, in its inter-causality with sexuality, is vital for the propagation and continuation of the human species. Lastly, but most importantly in a sociological sense, it provides inexhaustible impetus and sets up goals for the development of human society.[7]

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Love not only possesses or claims temporal eternity, but is also ubiquitous in an ontological sense. Given this, it is an unavoidable item in any teleological discussion or treatment. That is why literature and art, as essential expressions of human aesthetic creativity, are ineluctably bound up with it. In turn, it is endlessly embodied in social realities. As far as such matters are concerned, the foregoing chapters of this dissertation make no claim to being exhaustive of a topic that is, after all, boundless. What they do tackle, is love in its dramatic and theatrical contexts, focusing on some of the most vital

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[6] G. Barbèra (ed.), *La Divina Commedia*, di Dante Alighieri, Edizione Vade-Mecum (Firenze: n.p., 1905), p. 450.

[7] This argument has frequently been repudiated by the Chinese authorities, this repudiation being typified by the political campaign known as "criticising the theory of alienation" mounted in 1984. According to the most authoritative of the governmental theorists, Hu Qiaomu, the impetus for human history is by no means humanitarianism, but is the class struggle, underlying which is the contradiction between the force of production and the relationship of production (in Marxist parlance). That is to say, the development of human society is not due to love, but on the contrary, due to hatred. Hatred as a destructive force is greatly favoured by the ruling ideology and love as its opposite frowned upon. As Mao says: "Without destruction there is no construction; destruction first and construction afterwards; start with destruction, and construction will follow naturally in its wake."

and intriguing aspects of a theme that has always been seen as of such mighty relevance to humanity. This dissertation makes no claim to comprehensiveness even in this sphere. For instance, the majority of classical Chinese dramas are love plays or include love, and a large proportion of them follows the pattern of "brilliant scholar and beautiful maiden" (*caizi-jiaren*) -- with the generally "happy" or harmoniously rounded-off endings that this pattern entails, but plays falling primarily into this category are excluded from the present discussions. Such a vast generality awaits more extensive studies.

This work adopts a reticulate structure, the introduction functioning as a focal centre for the subsequent chapters, which parallel each other in a synchronological, rather than chronological, relationship. In other words, the connection is of spatial alignment rather than temporal sequence. In addition, another connectivity, a circular one, is present, in the form of a cross-comparative rather than lateral and parallel study. Chinese drama is located at the centre, while the works of other cultures are brought in to form a referential system, for the sake of a certain degree of mutual control and inter-verification.

None the less, the above basic approach does not exclude all latent logical sequentiality. The concrete analyses start with love involving religion, and are followed by the other types in a logical sequence. Religion is often a mixed ideology, looking in at least two directions. It can be used for political-style indoctrination and control, but also, when it agrees to allow the mortal human direct contact with the supernatural, dilutes mundane political oppressions by empowering the individual to communicate with, and in theory obtain help from, powers outside mortal society. In some ways, however, that empowering may seem like just another layer of superior-stratum control, since the supernatural is usually held to have the decisive upperhand in such relationships, and religion often has its own demands for submission and conformity, frequently requiring a merging of the individual into the general or collective. When it demands such allegiance and submission, it inevitably comes into conflict with the individuality, freedom and waywardness of romantic love. Yet religion, too, often claims the word love, and the ferocity of the clash between the two definitions can be seen in the analyses above. Buddhism, Daoism and Chinese folk-religions tend to be less insistent on the love element in worshipping deities, however, and the contrast between the Eastern and

Western versions of the romantic love versus religion battle is as helpful in formulating overall definitions as are the obvious similarities.

Grounded in the intimately related concepts of religion and supernaturality is the notion of the sacredness of imperiality and kingship. Kingship in some countries was originally identical with priesthood, and even in the later stage of European history, it was commonly supposed to be granted by divine power, while Chinese emperors were viewed as charismatically (in the technical and quasi-religious sense) endowed, since their "imperial power was the supreme and religiously consecrated structure; in a sense it stood above the crowd of popular deities."[8] Kings and emperors have very frequently been regarded as the representatives of the laws of the cosmos or of religions, embodiments and channels of such, but in actual fact their status has had a certain ambivalence, since they are of the flesh, having the same biological and emotional tendencies towards individualism and personal needs as other humans. This duality, which concerns both their status and their emotions, inevitably creates an internal and very often an external conflict, that can be full of considerable tension and even highly destructive, yet to a large extent it is that tension and peril that has made the topic of royal and imperial love a fascinating one for literature and indeed for other media and discussions in general. There are great similarities East and West, but as the above research shows, there are major divergences and major differences of emphasis, many of which may be ascribed to the greater pivotality and cosmic aura accorded the Chinese emperors, the greater size of their territories and governed populations, and also, the widespread absence in China of the idea of a personal god. Because of this latter condition, it has been easier for the status of god to be assumed by mortals, and as Weber says: "Secular and spiritual authority were combined in one hand, the spiritual predominating."[9] In the love relationships of kings, emperors, queens and empresses of decisive political power or influence, romantic love faces what is probably its most

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[8] Max Weber, "The Confucian Life Orientation", in his *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth (New York: The Free Press / London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1964), p. 143.

[9] Max Weber, "City, Prince and God", in his *The Religion of China*, op. cit., p. 31. This situation has exercised a long-term influence even on contemporary Chinese politics: the extreme anti-religious feeling of some years ago can be only interpreted as the ambition to achieve such a dualism. Again Weber says: "The cult of the great deities of heaven and earth, with which some deified heroes and

difficult challenge, since the sublime morality of romance is often placed in combat with the undeniable morality of duty to the state and to political and social order. The Chinese platitude "Female beauty causes the fall of the state" (*Nüse wangguo*) is when applied as an explanation of historical events no doubt nearly always, if not always, a biased interpretation, or at least an over-simplification. All the same, from a positive point of view in our present discussions, it may assist in concentrating our attention on the enormous potential of love with a royal or imperial partner. The mysterious latency of imperial love is deciphered when the tension between "Eros and Civilisation",[10] between Nature (often symbolised by the female[11]) and culture (which is mainly visualised in the patriarchal social form), and between Id and Super-ego, is starkly exposed.[12] It is because of such overtones that imperial love appeals to all walks of life from generation to generation, possessing an enduring charm, and it is the enormous scale of these combats which give plays on the topic their particular élan and éclat.

If love dramas involving religion and royalty or imperiality focus attention on the tensions of enchainment and the strain of ambivalence, time and space are also restrictive to the full discussion of love and human relationships. Modern dramas in particular have attempted to break free of the bonds of era and geography, so as to broaden and refine the sphere of discussion, and also to enable greater fluidity of interactions, so that the

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special spirits were connected, was an affair of the state. These cults were not managed by priests but by the holders of political power." "The Confucian Life Orientation", op. cit., p. 143.

[10] See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

[11] Cf. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet: "Our reassessment of literary relationships between men and women is also colored by the anthropological thesis that differentiation of genders is an expression of the more fundamental antithesis between nature and culture. . . . Indeed, the coupling of a heroine and a villainess who represent this polarity is one of the commonplaces of literature." "Introduction" to *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, edited by Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. xviii. The sexual relationship is also interpreted along this line by philosophical works, for instance: "The identification of women with nature was universal in prehistory. In hunting or agrarian societies dependent upon nature, femaleness was honored as an immanent principle of fertility. As culture progressed, crafts and commerce supplied a concentration of resources freeing men from the caprices of weather or the handicap of geography. With nature at one remove, femaleness receded in importance." Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 7-8; and in addition: "Women and nature have an age-old association -- an affiliation that has persisted throughout culture, language, and history. Their ancient interconnections have been dramatized by the simultaneity of two recent social movements -- women's liberation, symbolized in its controversial infancy by Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963), and the ecology movement, which built up during the 1960s and finally captured national attention on Earth Day, 1970." Carolyn Merchant, "Introduction: Women and ecology", in her *The Death of Nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution* (London: Wildwood House, 1982), p. xv.

dramatist is not restricted to one region, one culture or one era, but can, to the benefit of the dramatic and philosophical argument, juxtapose the utmost variety at will. The preceding chapters have concentrated on salient examples from China and Britain of this tendency towards temporal and spatial freedom of treatment, whereby dislocations of time and space render it impossible to view the stage reality as reality in the ordinary sense, and the audience is at the least hard put to identify the actual locales in time or space of the characters on stage, this evoking a mood of the contra-normal or absurd.[13] In modern modernistic arts, *the absurd* has become an important aesthetic category and entered into the rank of such traditional categories as *the beautiful*, *the humorous*, *the sublime*, and *the ridiculous*. It provides a new angle from which to look at the relationship between human beings and their environment, and has, accordingly, given birth in modern drama to a new grace, that of the "defiance or scorn" recommended by Camus[14]. On the one hand, it distinguishes itself from the comical of the ridiculous and the humorous, and on the other it keeps its distance from the tragic of beauty and sumblimity. In this sense, the aura of absurdity in *Golden Lotus* may be seen as a sign of the attainment of modernity in Chinese drama.

The greater freedom and fluidity that such creative tendencies seek, also encourage a widening of explorations into the matter of love, extending out from specifically romantic love to the broader, looser and underlying love that can be considered under the umbrella-term "universal love", a vastness of affection. Here it is difficult to say which has priority: the new structural and dramaturgical freedoms, or the quest for wider elbow-room in the matter of ideas. No doubt it is a two-way process of mutual influence. There is indeed no absolute barrier or sharp demarcation line between the basic substance of romantic love and, for instance, motherly love, or indeed any other kind of love or other feeling on the gamut of goodwill. It is instructive to observe, as the above discussions have stressed, that dramatic treatments of other kinds of love, motherly love

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[12] Cf. Freud.

[13] Albert Camus, who initiated such an existentialist conception of the absurd, says: "In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity." Quoted from Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of Absurd*, op. cit., p. 16.

[14] Cf. Thomas Nagel, *The Absurd*, in Oswald Hanfling (ed.), *Life and Meaning: A reader* (No publishing place [Oxford?]: Basil Blackwell in association with The Open University, 1987), p. 58

in our examples, are in fact often inextricable from discussions of romantic love. Both Grusha and Crabapple, especially Grusha with her steadfast romantic commitment to Simon, are illustrations of this inextricability.

If it is difficult to extricate the types of love absolutely, so it is difficult, and indeed unfruitful, to separate the various elements through which dramas debate the problems that love involves. The choice of love as a topic has, as pointed out, considerable implications not only as one might readily suspect for theme, plot and characterisation, but furthermore for the very nature of linguistic styles and even for dramatic structures and dramaturgical theories themselves, as saliently illustrated by Brecht's taking the mighty theme of love as the one naturally commensurate with his mighty dramaturgical experiments. The above discussions have sought to emphasise, in an unusual but hopefully fruitful way, this interdependence of all the facets of drama by a holistic approach as opposed to a narrowly categorical one.

Although the discourses of this thesis have by no means exhausted all the many different kinds of love, even of romantic love, they have dealt with several of the most prominent and crucial kinds, and the framework of analysis should facilitate the slotting-in of other analyses of other kinds of love with relative ease. And since many of them are subsidiary or closely related forms, it should also ease the addition of them to the overall scheme of analysis in a systematic and orderly way. At the least, the conclusions above should serve as a strong foil and strong stimulus for further elucidations.

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The types of loveselected, being particular categories, are obviously, as mentioned in my Introduction, distinguished thereby from such prototypes as the Chinese play *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (*Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*) and *Romeo and Juliet.* (We note here, incidentally, how the pairs of protagonists in both these latter plays are eponymous, their names ringing through the ages as the epitomes of the romantic relationship.) This particularity, is not only marked in the content, but also by the techniques of the dramas, for example, the "love freed from temporal and spatial bondage" discussed in Chapter Four is primarily characterised by histrionic means, used to achieve an end which is, however, not very far from that of the other types.

Nevertheless, through these works there still runs a subtle notional thread. Close scrutiny reveals in them a persistent momentum of love that elevates itself from the material level to an ontological height, from the relativistic toward the absolute, from individuality toward universality, from sensuality toward spirituality.

In Chapter Two, we see instances of how the idea of love bound up with instinctive lust and desire is eventually purified and transformed into a love that has ubiquity and infinity, a sacred and holy feeling for the Almighty. To a certain extent, the *eros* is in them desexualised and employed as a vehicle to convey the religious tenor.[15] However, in the two Chinese plays, such a Platonic vein is not in evidence and carnal desire is neither mixed with nor transformed into ardent religious feeling. A distinct line is drawn in these two between loving female beauty (*haose*, *se* being a term of multifaceted connotations, enabling a widely understood word-play between its fairly usual sense of "female beauty" and the Buddhist definition of it as "the illusoriness of material things") and loving metaphysical wisdom, between profane desire and the aspiration for transcendence, between sexual adulation and the adoration of Nature and tranquillity. The latter variant resembles imperial love, in which love's inclination is to break through the boundaries of sex and sensuousness so as to enter the realm of wider commonality, also breach the demarcation between the natural and supernatural, the relative and infinite, resulting in identifying person and person, mankind and universe, society and Nature.[16] In this context, the Buddhist and Daoist hues are too conspicuous to ignore.

As with religious love, the conceptualisation of Love in *Palace of Eternal Life* and *Shakuntala* is ever inclined to augment itself and expand its application. In the former case, it spreads laterally to become pervasive, while in the latter it takes modern audiences back into the primordial era so as to demonstrate a prototype of loving

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[15] D. W. Robertson says: "Christianity was then [in the Middle Ages] recognized as a religion of love, rather than as a cult of righteousness, so that aberrations of love were thought to have far-reaching implications in the conduct of everyday affairs, because of the broad area of associations connected with it in theology and philosophy, idolatrous love was a useful vehicle for the expression of literary and poetic themes. But it was not regarded in terms of sentiment, or that great criterion for aesthetic appeal in modern novels, plays, and television programs, stark psychological realism." "The Concept of Courtly Love as an Implement to the Understanding of Medieval Texts", in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, in F. X. Newman (ed.), *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (New York: Research Foundation of State University of New York, 1968), p. 4.

[16] What religion opposes is mainly not love as such, but pleasure in sex.

paragons. This is a key point that has been largely ignored, and the neglect of thoroughgoing analysis has in China accordingly permitted various doubts and adverse criticism of the ideas, moral values and logical consistency of *Palace of Eternal Life*. Concerning one aspect of this unfavourable modern reaction, in his *A History of Chinese Literature* which is one of the most popular and authoritative books, You Guoen, in trying to point out the shortcomings of this play, says: "The playwright sometimes departs from the protagonists' social circumstances and class traits, so that [the description of their love] does not seem true."[17] For another example, in another equally weighty work with the same title, we read: "Legendarily, Li Longji [i.e. Emperor Minghuang (Xuanzong)] and Yang Yuhuan [ie. Lady Yang] sincerely love each other, but historically, their indulgence in love functioned badly in the then current politics. It is not easy to reconcile this paradox in one play taken on its own. That is because in feudal society, although it was not impossible for the emperor and his consort to love sincerely, to a certain extent, such love was necessarily based on the foundation of class exploitation."[18]

These comments are confined within a predetermined physical and relativistic scope, and therefore the absolute and the infinite dimensions of imperial love remain outwith their permitted range of vision. They have not realised that when Eros attains the lustre of sublimity, social definitions become of weaker relevance,[19] and the path is paved for the moment when intersexual love becomes universal love, when each party sacrifices itself for the other, each devoting its *self* to the other, finding its own value in its partner, casting its *self* in the image of the other and reading its heart in the other. Love at this stage has surpassed the Platonic level whereon lies spiritual love, but although it has

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[17] You Guoen, *Zhongguo wenxue-shi*, 4 vols. (Peking: Renminwenxue Chubanshe, 1964), p. 1049.

[18] Zhongguo Wenxueshi Bianxiezu (subordinate to Zhongguo Shehui-kexueyuan Wenxue-yanjiusuo), *Zhongguo wenxueshi*, 3 vols. (Peking: Renminwenxue Chubanshe, 1963), vol. 3, p. 1052.

[19] Herbert Marcuse develops the Freudian idea of sublimation and strengthens its positive significance to a considerable extent: "This cultural refinement of sexuality, its sublimation to love, took place within a civilization which established possessive private relations apart from, and in a decisive aspect conflicting with, the possessive societal relations. While, outside the privacy of the family, men's existence was chiefly determined by the exchange value of their products and performances, their life in home and bed was to be permeated with the spirit of divine and moral law. Mankind was supposed to be an end in itself and never a mere means". "The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros", in his *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 200.

disengaged itself from involvement with the flesh, it is still strictly speaking within the sexual scope.

Imperial love is characterised by its majesty and vastness in terms of subject matter, by the sublimity of its aesthetic feelings and, by the conceptual universality of its thematic import. Its progression from particularity to universality parallels the love which involves religion, the main difference being that imperial love expands the particular and the individual to the state of cosmic pervasiveness, while religious love allows or requires the particular to be drowned in universality. In other words, universality in imperial love grows out of the individual cell, while in love involving religion the individual is absorbed and assimilated in universality. It is because of this essential difference that these two dramatic types cannot equate with or be seen as interchangeable with each other.

Leaving Chapter Four aside for the while, following naturally on from this comes the universal love under discussion in Chapter Five. Involved in such love are equally complicated conceptions of human nature, such as altruism and other matters of profound philosophical associations. The definitions of these latter concepts and their inter-relationships merit at the very least a monograph to themselves. Indeed, the detailed elucidation of the causality between universal love and intersexual love fairly defies our limited space, and no perfection is claimed or indeed possible here, or perhaps even conceivable within mortal realms. As Roger Trigg cogently points out: "Without a conception of what it is to be human, no one can say much about human societies or human practices. All too often, such assumptions are merely implicit in the work of various intellectual disciplines. Only the greatest thinkers are able to make them explicit."[20] All the same, this study has brought to light subtle and powerful interactions and informative socio-political and cultural backgrounds to a number of crucial concepts in this respect. Since the present or recent times are in some way a culmination and confluence of past influences, it makes good expository sense for this penultimate chapter (Chapter Five) to have re-examined the Cultural Revolution and that period's meticulous and zealous avoidance of love as a theatrical motif, and it attempts to probe into the social and political rationales behind such an apparently unreasonable and illogical phenomenon, (this echoes my Introduction). It is indeed commonly accepted

[20] Roger Trigg, *Ideas of Human Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 3.

that "philosophical assumptions about our nature lie at the root of any discipline connected with **the activities of men and women**"[21], yet my study does not stay with purely conceptual reflections, but endeavours to link them up with the concrete historical facts and elucidate the division between the apparently opposite matters of Nature or human nature and of regimes or politics in the guise of civilisation. So the discussion here bears some significance for the understanding of Chinese society, and the Cultural Revolution in particular. Here too, religious love serves as a referent: In mediaeval Europe, love was desexualised in theory and no doubt some times in practice for the sake of transforming it into the more widely applied emotion of universal charity, but in the Cultural Revolution the negation of love was a premise for the further negation of human nature. In the former case, love was potentially expanded into the infinite, whereas in the latter it was the aim to reduce love to nothing while its opposite, hatred, was actively fostered. Religion throughout the ages has not usually negated love in general, but, on the contrary has taught and advocated love.[22] What religious mores oppose is the more restricted category of mundane, especially sexual, pleasure, whereas in the case of the Cultural Revolution, people were encouraged and compelled to hate to love, or to love to hate, in a comprehensive manner.[23] From this point of view, it would be flattering, rather than critical, to judge a modern totalitarian regime such as that of the Cultural Revolution as analogous to governments and societies of medieval times, since

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[21] Emboldenings mine; ibid.

[22] Cf. D. W. Robertson says: "Christianity was then recognized as a religion of love, rather than as a cult of righteousness, so that aberrations of love were thought to have far-reaching implications in the conduct of everyday affairs. Because of the broad area of associations connected with it in theology and philosophy, idolatrous love was a useful vehicle for the expression of literary and poetic themes. But it was not regarded in terms of sentiment, romantic rebelliousness, sentimentality, or that great criterion for aesthetic appeal in modern novels, plays, and television programs, stark psychological realism." "The Concept of Courtly Love", in F. X. Newman (ed.), *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (New York: Research Foundation of State University of New York, 1968), p. 4.

[23] What religion opposes is mainly not love *per se*, but pleasure in sexuality. An eloquent illustration of this is what was called "chastely engendering" in Medieval France, in which intercourse was carried out with the female fully dressed, and for the sake of reproduction with the minimum of pleasure. Cf. Bermard I. Murstein: "The association of pleasure with marriage would have been, in the eyes of the Church, a deficit rather than an asset. In fact, in France, the religious woman wore a night shirt, a *chemise cagoule*, which extended to her ankles. The gown contained a suitable aperture through which the husband could impregnate his wife without any other direct physical contact". See B. I. Murstein, "Marriage among the Medieval Laity", in his *Love, Sex, and Marriage through the Ages* (New York: Spring Publishing Company, 1974), p. 134.

such a regime goes much further in the direction of the alienation of human nature and human community of spirit.

Let us come back to Chapter Four. As elaborated in this chapter, love freed from temporal and spatial confines is also depicted by means of stylistic devices as approaching universality. Love here remains restricted to activities of mortal men and mortal women, but, as an idea, transcends time and space and causes a convergence of multifarious dimensions, so that a conceptual distillation of love interaction between man and woman is displayed. In this sense, it differs from universal love as outlined in Chapter Five, but it should be stressed, none the less, that intersexual love cannot really be detached from interpersonal love, since true lovers love each other not only as man and woman, but as human being and human being. It is a logical progression that when sexual love reaches its true consummation, it has attained the condition of love in the ontological sense, and is on the verge of transcending gender for the fullest execution of its potential. This is *sublimation* in Herbert Marcuse's terminology. He says: "This transformation of the libido would be the result of a societal transformation that released the free play of individual needs and faculties", and: "We have spoken of the *self-sublimation of sexuality*. The term implies that sexuality can, under specific conditions, create highly civilised human relations without being subjected to the repressive organisation which the established civilisation has imposed upon the instinct. Such self-sublimation presupposes historical progress beyond the institutions of the performance principle, which in turn would release instinctual regression."[24] Love, once it takes shape and reaches consummation, may transcend flesh and exist as spiritual and emotional experience. Only by this can be explained the everlasting affection of Héloise for Abélard when he was mutilated in his flesh and his carnal desire diminished, and only by this can we accept the truth and comprehend the philosophy in the legend that when Héloise' was buried with Abélard, he, who had been dead for twenty years, extended his arms toward her to receive and embrace her for eternity.[25] The same idea but seeming opposite may be found in universal love: the humanitarian and loving personalities of heroines such as

[24] Herbert Marcuse, "The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros", in his *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 202.

[25] Cf. Wallace Fowlie, "Hélois: human love", in his *Love in Literature: Studies in symbolic expression* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1965), pp. 29-36.

Crabapple Bloom and Grusha are decisive and fully alerted as regards the manner and style of their love in the sexual sense.

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Although the main theme of this thesis is love, since ideas are not to be notionally detached from dramaturgical structures or from theatrical environments, (and thus society as a whole), stylistic studies have been added in the course of this exploration. The purpose of this is to clarify some intrinsic features common to drama East and West, and some vital distinctions between the two. This clarification is carried out in Chapters One, Four and Five. Chapter Four in particular is concerned with dramaturgical in addition to thematic elements, and emphasises the Western influence on Chinese drama. What calls for especial consideration in this regard, is the historical reminder, in Chapter One, of the obviously vigorous impact of Western dramaturgy on Chinese traditional drama over recent decades, and we should note how stylistic evolution has paralleled and also been very much due to upheavals in the general realms of ideas. That is to say, the addition of certain new ideas and attitudes in China has seemed necessarily to compel the development of certain developments of theatrical form and technical expansion. That such has been the situation is further strongly argued by the phenomenon of Wei Minglun's play *Golden Lotus*. In this play, when dialogues take place between history and the present, stylistic tradition and convention are correspondingly subjected to vanguard exploration, and this dramaturgical modernity is largely to be attributed to the prevailing modern Chinese attitude to love. In this sense, all that *Golden Lotus* is doing is satisfying the demand of the spirit of the new times. Corresponding to the frequent societal convulsions that have been taking place for a period of nearly a century, the traditional Chinese attitudes to love have undergone constant evolution and violent change. Under the shock of the Cultural Revolution and the catalystic effects of imported exotic, Occidental notions, these attitudes have become ever more complex and intricate, and this innovation in the concept of love has acted as an objective demand for the formative change of contemporary drama, which has naturally been unable to extricate itself from such an ancient, eternal and humanly fundamental theme. Echoing the spirit of the new era, and reflecting new types of subject matter, contemporary Chinese

traditional-style drama (*xiandai chuantongxi*) has been subjected to continued alteration in terms of histrionic structure and to innovation in terms of theatrical technique.

This large-scale change has also encouraged, very recently, more solidly based analyses and conjectures concerning the problems and prospects of Chinese theatre in particular. Not inconsiderable new glimpses of the inter-influences between East and West have already been brought to the fore in such analyses. The well-known modern scholar Xu Shuofang is only partly right when he says: "Chinese literature did not receive obvious influences [from the West] until the beginning of this century, and in European literary history up to now, hardly any signs have been seen of the influence from China. There has been a long-term isolation between the developments of Chinese and European literature, which is, we must say, a shortcoming of history"[26]. In actual fact, Chinese drama has had far more influence on Western drama than is commonly recognised either East or West, and there has been considerable if spasmodic interest in it in the West since the eighteenth century, just as in general the case described by Edward W. Said: "The Oriental is an integral part of European *material* civilisation and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles."[27] More specifically, Richard Southern points out: "There has been made available in recent yeas some considerable amount of information about Chinese theatre make-up, properties, costumes and musical instruments. . . . The Chinese offer us, however, a splendid example of the pure 'organized-stage' phase of the theater. Their classical stage is among the simplest, although the richest, in the world. . . . Its description is so simple as to be nearly 'perfect'; . . . there could be no more complete (nor scarcely any more advanced) expression of the booth-stage tradition conformed into a national form."[28] Even when Mei Lanfang visited the United States, *The World*'s critic was impressed by the austere stage and considered that the Chinese "are some centuries ahead of us in their neglect of the material clutter of stage scenery and furnishing. . . . the Chinese substitute for these

[26] Xu Shuofang, "Tang Xianzu he Shashibiya", in his *Lun Tang Xianzu ji qita* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1983), p. 73.

[27] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Books, 1985), p. 2.

encumbrances a few conventional gestures, which their audiences have for centuries been accustomed to translate instantly and imaginatively into the appropriate scenery and action."[29]

Aside from the evident influence, the similarities, coincidental or intrinsic, have also been taken into consideration by recent Chinese and Western scholars, Tao-Ching Hsü, for example, declaring: "Taking the whole history of the theatre into account it has been shown that most if not all of the characteristics of the Chinese theatre can be found in the European theatre; and *vice versa*"[30]. The celebrated playwright Tian Han remarked: "The European playwrights who attended our First Confluence-Performance of Spoken Drama [*Diyi-jie Huaju Huiyan*, in 1956] say: 'The performance of Chinese classical drama in Europe greatly shook the Western theatre, and thus occasioned a fad for imitating Chinese forms of theatrical expression. But in the performances of this meeting, there have been hardly any signs of their having learnt from their classical drama.'"[31] Again, Richard Southern has pointed out the resemblance between Chinese and Elizabethan: "The close relation of the whole system [of Chinese stage] with that of the Elizabethan stage is remarkable."[32]

When the spotlight is turned more fully onto this question, no doubt a much more coherent picture will emerge of Chinese influences, for which there is plentiful written evidence. Yet the influences have undoubtedly not always been precise ones, and the poor quality of translation and cultural differences have certainly hindered and diluted them, so that by and large until the present century, the general bodies of drama East and West have appeared fascinatingly distinct from each other, in a manner that should stimulate curiosity and research. Treading warily, since spontaneous invention is not always easy to distinguish from cultural diffusion, the above discussions have, even in passing, raised and tackled many of the important issues connected with this question.

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[28] Richard Southern, "The Organized Stage", in his *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 205.

[29] As quoted in A. C. Scott, "Chinese Drama Goes to America", in his *Mei Lan-Fang: The life and times of a Peking actor* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1971), p. 110.

[30] Tao-Ching Hsü, *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1985), p. 636.

[31] Tian Han, "Zhongguo huaju-yishu fazhan-de lujing he zhanwang", in Tian Han & others (eds.), *Zhongguo huaju-yundong wushi-zhounian shiliao-ji* (Peking: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1958), p. 11.

[32] Richard Southern, *The Seven Ages of the Theater*, op. cit., p. 205.

The answers, when they are finally forthcoming, will no doubt depend to a large extent on much and meticulous attention to detail, in a subtle and sensitive, cautious process of sifting, and such is the direction that has been essayed above.

The objective similarities observed suggest various common laws of dramatic development, but certain wider cultural gulfs have in practice limited the interchanges in theatrical culture. Even where the mutual influences have seemingly been strong, as in this century, the relative superficiality of underlying intercultural comprehension has severely reduced the genuineness of the exchanges, as seen in the case of Brecht's innovations and in aspects of the supposed Westernisation of Chinese theatre. The vitality of modern Western dramaturgy is hardly to be doubted, but there has been much underestimation of the traditional vitality of the Chinese theatre, an understanding of which vitality helps in some ways to explain why modern Chinese theatre has so energetically welcomed the notion of Western-style dramaturgical reforms this century. Similarly, the limitations of deeper cultural understandings help explain the shortcomings of Chinese experimentations in that direction. One feels strongly, especially in the light of the considerable evidence mentioned above of the breadth and vigour of traditional Chinese drama, that any reforms must draw more fully on long-term Chinese inspirations, even for the sake of assisting the proper assimilation of exotic theories. Wholesale transplanting of surface Westernisation would produce a plant without solid roots, and Chinese drama needs to recover its own creative and assimilative self-confidence. This is typically illustrated by vicissitudes of the Civilised Drama (*Wenmingxi*) in early twentieth century China. According to Ouyang Yuqian's authoritative definition, this "civilised new drama" was a "progressive new drama (*jinbu-de xin-de xiju*)" initially, but the term shortly became derogatory because of the very limited subsequent achievements of this experiment in Westernisation. He adds that, "For as much as the past thirty years,

Civilised Drama has always been a laughing stock. Anything onstage that is poor, exaggerated or careless or somewhat chaotic is termed 'Civilised Drama'."[33]

The foregoing chapters on certain special and salient types of love play have pointed out and partly proven the spontaneous and indigenous dramatic common ground between Chinese theatre and foreign theatre-types, and also revealed the importance of love both as a universal object of philosophical disquisition and as a dramatic motif. Firstly, love, as a unity of heart and mind, relates with various sociological, philosophical and psychological concepts, such as fidelity and equality, constancy and passion, freedom and restriction, and so on, as indicated in the chapters on imperial love. Secondly, in its capacity as a, and surely the, major representative of the broader underlying emotions and attitudes of humanity or humane goodwill, romantic love possesses a solidly founded tenacious vitality, as explained in the chapter on "love versus religion". Thirdly, love may be evaluated from multifarious view-angles, and its quality is subject to both historical particularities and conceptual universalities, as analysed in the chapter on "love freed of time and space's bonds". Finally, love in the intersexual romantic sense is subtly associated with universal love in an asexual sense, that of humanitarian or humane love, and therefore being at its finest a feeling that is driven by personal choice and private decision, it challenges or interferes with politics in hidden or tacit ways. This point is elaborated and fortified in the chapter on the play by Brecht and its common grounds with the two Chinese plays, and corroborated by the earlier discussions about the fate of the love motif during the Cultural Revolution.

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Although an topic of obvious importance, love in dramatic literature is one that had been curiously avoided on a grand scale, and this is particularly so in comparative studies spanning East and West. There are no doubt many reasons for this, aside from limited cultural communication in general, and they probably include the sheer pervasiveness and commonplaceness of love, in reality, in aspirations or as a theme. Subjects that are always with us tend to be neglected because of their apparent familiarity and because it is vaguely concluded that because it is always likely to be around there is no compelling

[33] Ouyang Yuqian, "Tan wenmingxi", in Tian Han & others (eds.), *Zhongguo huaju-yundong*

reason for haste in the examining it, for tomorrow will do just as well, and anyway it's a highly tricky subject. Yet perhaps it is not so intractably complex when viewed from certain angles, love after all being part of the gamut that includes vague goodwill, but having its own extra biological, poetic, literary, artistic and other associations and its particular emotional height and intensity. As with many subjects, it is probably more difficult to deal with within one culture only, since there is often a lack of sharply cut contrasts as reference-points, and comparative studies offer greater clarity by the juxtaposing of, in some ways, vastly different cultures, so that not only are the differences more clear cut but also any similarities sharply highlighted by the foil of the differences.[34] Yet comparative studies as a whole between the world's culture, especially the most different ones, are in their infancy, and indeed in many ways one feels that one should be waiting for culture-specific studies to advance sufficiently to make the task much easier and more reliable. This waiting, however, would in itself be a mistake, since culture-specific and intercultural studies are interdependent on each other for sustenance, precision and progress. The need for mutually vital generalisation and detailed specification is scarcely deniable. The nature of scholarly advances is always one of "circular warfare", skirmishing, withdrawing, and circling back again for another try. There is clearly much that can, and should, be done here and now, no matter what the difficulties. The world, moreover, through the explosive expansion of technological, commercial and communication links is now much smaller and intercultural explorations all the more urgently needed.

Cultural influences flow freely East and West more than ever before, and no culture is any more, if any ever was, an island unto itself. This is one reason why the attitudes of the Chinese Cultural Revolution period are so important not just for studies of China, but also for studies of the human condition in general. That period saw an extreme attitude to love, and it seems appropriate that early in the above disquisition the

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wushi-zhounian shiliao-ji (Peking: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1958), pp. 48-9.

[34] Contemporary Chinese in general have been fairly, though not considerably, conscious of the relevance that the West or Europe has had for Chinese culture ancient and modern, and the same is becoming true of Westerners. For instance Said says: "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and riches and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting images, idea, personality, experience." Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

most extreme antipathy that the world has seen, or is perhaps ever likely to see, to love should be presented to set off the other, more mixed, more positive and more favourable attitudes to love, in the past and in the present. The lessons to be drawn from the Cultural Revolution view of love are lessons for all and always, and I have shown how inextricably and deliberately that view was bound up with purposes of political control. As illustrated above, love, especially romantic love, was a force most feared by the power-mongers, and indeed it will always be so, since it arrogates to itself plenipotentiary powers that challenge the rigidities and external impositions of oppressively collectivising dogmas.

This study has tended to stress similarities even more than differences among the major traditions of drama. Concentration on similarities is, to my experience, much more laborious than that on differences, especially in an empirical sense and with micro-comparative methods, because differences between distant nations are more facilely perceptible and understandable. Geographical distance, it is true, easily begets differences, but the nature of many shared basic conditions such as stage performance, narrative basics and even those of the scope of fundamental human emotions and thought processes should also warn us against ignoring the spontaneous similarities that are likely to exist, and, as shown by the above research, do arise in spatially very far-apart cultures. A reasonable view should not be afraid to seek for the similarities, even when the dominant fashions demand emphasis on difference. Yet we must be cautious in both directions, seeing neither difference nor similarity too readily, and this study has sought to maintain a tentativeness that will not discourage or block further explorations and refinements or adjustments. There is much resistance to the notion of similarities between different cultures, partly perhaps because difference is a neater and more expedient notion for the mind to handle, a them-and-us-ness appealing to many as the simpler solution; but maybe we should not quest after too much simplicity in this complex world. Indeed, a profound identification of the spontaneous intercultural similarities is essential to any deeper appreciation of the undoubtedly fascinating culture-specific differences and that cultural plurality that the world should thirst after at least as much as after ecological diversity. The foregoing has sought to elevate and render more precise our definitions of both similarity and difference in the sphere of that most striking medium of entertainment

and communication, drama, and in so doing has chosen that most striking motif and human emotion, love, as the relevant pabulum. One can be confident that the on-going process of exploration along these lines will continue to bear fruit, and steadily refine our definitions.

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APPENDIX

Entries of *Hua* (Flower) in *Palace of Eternal Life*

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
I scrutinise her in the light of the moon and lanterns:
Even ***the flowers*** *in the courtyard are not so charming as her.*[1]

CHORUS.
"Jasper ***Flower****",*
"The Jade Tree", and
"The Moonlit Spring River",
Are all sung in unison. [2]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
The golden pins and jade box
Are studded with emerald ***florets****,*
I hold them firmly to my chest, . . . [3]

LADY YANG.
May we ask how many crabapple trees --
YONGXIN and NIANNU.
-- ***blossomed*** *over night?* [4]

YONGXIN. . . .
Add this ***cherry blossom*** *to your hair.* [5]

LADY YANG. Last night I bore so much of your favour, the rain and dews were heavy and thick, so I couldn't help feeling that **the flower and it's twig** were exhausted[6].

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Today I am to enjoy rare **flowers** with my darling.[7]

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[1] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 2, p. 5.
[2] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.
[3] Ibid., Act 2, p. 5.
[4] Ibid., Act 4, p. 13.
[5] Ibid., Act 4, p. 13.
[6] "The rain and dews (*yulu*)" refers to the emperor's side of the intercourse, and "the flower and twig" (*huazhi*) to Lady Yang herself. It is a linguistic habit to compare the masculine sexual action to "rain and dews", and a delicate woman to a "flower". Act 4, p. 15.

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Leaning on the fences,
*The **exuberant flowers open** with dews;* [8]

GAO. I report: The **peonies** at the Eaglewood Pavilion are fully **blooming**, . . .[9]

AN LUSHAN. . . .
The spring hue seduces human beings,
*The strollers are greeted by the birds **behind the flowers**.*[10]

TOGETHER.
*The **flower-fancying** wind blows as a fan,*
Rows upon rows of willows look misty and smoky.
Wherever we pass,
*It's hard to tell the **purple path** from the **red dusts**.*[11]

TOGETHER.
*The vermilion wheels crush and break **the floral banks**,*
The ear rings and hair pins are dropped
*Against **a background of falling petals**.*[12]

AN LUSHAN. . . .
***Crowds of flowers** belong to a single man only,*
So the highness of imperiality is shown
And the nobility of royalty is known [13]

ALL WOMEN.
It's more exquisite that the skirts are stuck with fragrant grass,
*And the hair covered with **wild flowers**.*[14]

FLOWER MAID.
Towards the vermilion gate and embroidered tower,
*I'm calling out eagerly selling **flowers**.*[15]

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[7] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 4, p. 15.
[8] Ibid., Act 4, p. 15.
[9] Ibid., Act 4, P. 15.
[10] Ibid., Act 5, p. 18.
[11]. "Purple path" and "red dusts" both refer to fallen flowers. Act 5, p. 18.
[12] *Palace of Eternal Life*, op. cit., Act 5, p. 19.
[13] Ibid., Act 5, p. 19.
[14] Ibid., Act 5, p. 20.

TOGETHER. . . .

Bees and butterflies join us idly,
Welcomed by willows and ***introduced by flowers.***[16]

TOGETHER.

Aroma comes up pushing our clothes,
The flowers *faintly scent the air,*
Mixed with warbling of the orioles,
Words and laughter are clearly heard.
The poplar floss falls like ***snowy flowers,***
Covering the white clover ferns;
The blue birds in pairs
Pick off ***the red petals*** *fallen.*[17]

GAO.

I issue the edict reigning in the horses of ***peach blossom,***
They ride on the golden saddles wearing skirts of butterfly.[18]

MAID.

The ***peach blossom*** *red and the willow emerald,*
The necromantic altar is filled with spring scenery,[19]

DUCHESS OF HAN and DUCHESS OF GUO.

It is even worse than
The cold ***plum blossom*** *with faint scent opening in the forbidden palace.*[20]

LADY YANG.

My poor hair!
You have accompanied my ***floral youth,*** *. . .*[21]

---

[15] Ibid., Act 5, p. 20.

[16] Ibid., Act 5, p. 20.

[17] This line derives from a poem by Du Fu (712-770), one of the best classical Chinese poets, sharing prime fame with Li Bai (Li Po, 701-762). The original for "the red petals" in this play is in his poem "the red kerchiefs". Before Du's poem, Wang Bo (647-675) had written *A Verse of the Falling Petals* (*Luohua-shi*), in which is the source line: "Gauze sleeves and red kerchiefs are coming and going across each other." Act 5, p. 21.

[18] "The horse of peach blossom" refers to the carriages of the three beauties, as "peach" (*tao*) linguistically possesses strong feminine nuances and suggests romantic love. Act 5, p. 21.

[19] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 5, P. 21.

[20] Ibid., Act 7, p. 27.

[21] Ibid., Act 8, p. 31.

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

On the carriage road grow the spring grasses,
In the royal garden ***blossoms*** *cover the twigs.*[22]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Hark,

The fresh ***flowers*** *seem rivalling for grandeur and beauty.*[23]

Eunuch.

In the red mansion beside the ***flowers,***
The wind and strings are played.[24]

GAO.

The spring breeze could move the heavens back,
The illustrious ***flower*** *would return.*[25]

MAIDS.

In pairs, in pairs,
The silk lanterns shine on the gorgeous ***flowers.***[26]

MOON MAIDEN.

I see the falling petals of ***heavenly flowers,*** *. . .*[27]

MOON MAIDEN. . . . the white elm and red cassia, grow as miraculous **flowers,** through millions of ages.[28]

COLD REED. That is the red cassia in the moon, which thrives right through the seasons, its **flowers** and leaves both being fragrant.[29]

LADY YANG.

The ***golden flowers*** *open wide,*
The emerald leaves keep them company [30]

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[22] Ibid., Act 9, p. 33.
[23] Ibid., Act 9, p. 34.
[24] Ibid., Act 9, p. 34.
[25] Ibid., Act 9, p. 35.
[26] Ibid., Act 9, p. 36.
[27] Ibid., Act 11, p. 44.
[28] Ibid., Act 11, p. 44.
[29] Ibid., Act 11, p. 47.
[30] Ibid., Act 11, p. 47.

COLD REED.

*Like **crabapple blossom** in its sound sleep,*
She gains even more charm and delicacy.[31]

COLD REED.

I come to invite you to the cassia palace
*And enjoy the coolness among the **blossoms**.*[32]

FAIRIES. *Bearing the celestial music,*
*We come over in a bustling crowd among **clusters of flowers**, . . .*[33]

LADY YANG.

The rouge-like rays of the rising sun dart onto the casement,
*A **flower**, red and limp, is about to melt away.*[34]

LADY YANG.

*The **floriated notes** glimmer,*
The silver ticks are delicate, . . .[35]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

Like a willow twig supple in the breeze,
*Resembling **lotus blossom** in the limpid ripples.*
*A fragrant **orchid flower** lies slant on your cloud-like bun, . . .*[36]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

In talent alone,
You can eclipse all the other flowers in the courtyard.[37]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

*It is merged with celestial **flowers***
*And mingled with the cassia **blossom**.*[38]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

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[31] Ibid., Act 11, p. 46.
[32] Ibid., Act 11, p. 47.
[33] Ibid., Act 11, p. 48.
[34] Ibid., Act 12, p. 50.
[35] Ibid., Act 12, p. 52. Those two line describe her writing out by hand of the musical score; "the silver ticks" refer to her revision marks.
[36] Ibid., Act 12, p. 52.
[37] Ibid., Act 12, p. 52.
[38] Ibid., Act 12, p. 53.

The mandarin ducks in the pond have slept in pairs
Under the twin ***blossoms*** *on the tip of the shared twig.*[39]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
The ***lotus blossom*** *is shamed by her beautiful dress.*[40]

YONGXIN.
A song chances to be sung under the ***flowers****, . . .*[41]

LI MU.
In the shadow of the ***flowers****,*
The royal path is even.[42]

LI MU.
The crescent shines on half of the wall,
The ***flowers*** *are swaying their shadows.*[43]

LADY YANG.
The sun shines over the pepper chamber and casts shadows,
The ***flowers*** *are toying with the gauze screened window.*[44]

LADY YANG.
The divine ***peach blossom*** *all dewed leans in the sun and bears its glory.*[45]

MAIDS.
In front of the ***flowers*** *people never grow old* [46]

ATTENDANTS.
Holding the golden ***floriated scarlet*** *tablet,*
I come to the treasure palace to wish them longevity.[47]

CHORUS.

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[39] Ibid., Act 12, p. 53.
[40] Ibid., Act 12, p. 53.
[41] Ibid., Act 12, p. 53.
[42] Ibid., Act 14, p. 62.
[43] Ibid., Act 14, p. 62.
[44] Ibid., Act 16, p. 70.
[45] Ibid., Act 16, P. 71.
[46] Ibid., Act 16, p. 71.
[47] Ibid., Act 16, p. 71.

The tree lives for thousands of years bearing the twin peaches,
*The **blossoms open** hundreds of feet wide sharing the same lotus.*[48]

CHORUS.
*The gauze harmonises with the **flowers' glamour**,*
A red cloud is floating over from the sky.
The rainbow banners surround her on all sides,
*The petals of the **celestial flowers** are falling formlessly.*[49]

CHORUS.
Now up, now down,
*A **flower** is flaunting, . . .*[50]

LADY YANG.
What can be done,
*If the **idle flower** shows off its beauty under the sun* [51]

LADY YANG.
***Flowers** brightened the house,*
The spring appeared on our faces,[52]
We were indulging in all kinds of pleasures.[53]

LADY YANG.
In the old days I often saw --
*The red sun stroking the forms of **flowers** and twigs;*[54]

LADY YANG.
*You will visit the **calyx**,*
I'm afraid for you,
*It is not so good as the **flower** in the East Tower.*[55]

YONGXIN. *Embracing in the dawn with the **flowers**, . .* [56]

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[48] Ibid., Act 16, P. 71.
[49] Ibid., Act 16, p. 73.
[50] *Huazhi zhaozhan*, a set-expression, is metaphorically descriptive of beautiful women gorgeously dressed. In this context, the literal image takes prominence over the stereotyped connotation. Ibid., Act 16, p. 73.
[51] Ibid., Act 18, p. 80.
[52] A verbatim translation, meaning to smile broadly.
[53] *Palace of Eternal life*, op. cit., Act 18, p. 82.
[54] Ibid., Act 19, p. 84.
[55] Ibid., Act 19, p. 88.
[56] Ibid., Act 21, p. 95.

YONGXIN and NIANNU.
Her beautifully formed jade-like nudity
resembles a ***lotus blossom*** *over the waves* [57]

YONGXIN.
Beneath a faint carress
Is betrayed a pair of ***floral buds.***[58]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Like a ***flower*** *shy of the dews,*
You are languorous and limp, . . .[59]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG and LADY YANG.
Even the unsympathetic ***flowers*** *and feelingless birds are infatuated,.*[60]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
The ***scent of flowers*** *is like a harmony of various fragrances, . . .*[61]

LADY YANG.
The beans have been sown in the golden dish,
And the ***flowers*** *are flaunting in the vase.*[62]

LADY YANG.
In the flicker of an eyelid,
The ***flower*** *will grow old,*
And the spring depart without a trace.[63]

EMPEROR and LADY YANG.
The ***flowers*** *are dim,*
The moon is dark,
Shadows and shapes are indistinguishable.[64]

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[57] Ibid., Act 21, P. 96.
[58] Ibid., Act 21, p. 96.
[59] Ibid., Act 21, p. 97.
[60] Ibid., Act 21. p. 97.
[61] Ibid., Act 22, p. 99.
[62] Another way to pray for blessings is to grow beans or wheat grains in a plate, and wrap the sprouts with colourful threads when they have grown about four inches high. Ibid., Act 22, p. 99.
[63] Ibid., Act 22, p. 100.
[64] Ibid., Act 22, p. 102.

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*The **pink petals of** the **lotus blossom** are falling off.*
In a range of carved crisscrosses,
*The **cassia blossoms** have just opened,*[65]

LADY YANG.
Hand in hand,
*We walk into the **flowers**,*[66]

LADY YANG.
*The **abundance of flowers** of vivid hue suggests her pretty face,*
. . .
*Like a **precious flower**,*
The beauty of the nation,
She smiles faintly and is often fondly eyed by the monarch.[67]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. . . .
*Coming upon her cheeks is a **flower**.*[68]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Suddenly she becomes limp, like --
*A drooping willow or **supple flower**,*
A delicate oriole or languid swallow.[69]

LADY YANG.
*The illusive **flowers** dazzle my eyes.*[70]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*The bright moon and radiant **flowers***
Have been frightened to pieces.[71]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. Oh, Heaven! It is my misfortune that makes me rove, and have burdened such a **flower-like beauty** with this journey in haste. How sad I am![72]

---

[65] Ibid., Act 24, P. 106.
[66] Ibid., Act 24, p. 106.
[67] Ibid., Act 24, p. 107.
[68] Ibid., Act 24, p. 108.
[69] Ibid., Act 24, p. 108.
[70] Ibid., Act 24, p. 108.
[71] Ibid., Act 24, p. 108.
[72] Ibid., Act 24, p. 109.

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

*The soft jade and **sweet flower***
Will be tossed onto the rugged road![73]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

*Present is the delicate **flower**,*
How can I have the heart to look on --
When it is damaged by the storm,
When it is thrown away to the very horizon![74]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. (Cries.)

In the past,
*Her beauty resembled the **peach blossom**,*
*The **peach blossom**;*

GAO.

But today,
*Her soul perishes on the **pear blossom**,*
*The **pear blossom***[75]

DUCHESS OF GUO.

*The **flourishing flower** has sagged before the wind,*
The prime has passed away in a dream.
Who still recognises the stylish me of the past!
Like a broken jade,
*Like a **faded blossom**,*
I am lying in the deserted wilderness;[76]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.

I cover my face with shame,
*That I couldn't rescue her moon figure and **flowery face**.*[77]

TUTELARY GOD.

In a second,
*The beauty in **bloom** was hanged with a three feet long sash, . . .*[78]

PIGLING.

The clouds are drifting,
In the shadow cast by the moon,

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[73] Ibid., Act 24, p. 109.
[74] Ibid., Act 24, p. 113.
[75] Ibid., Act 25, P. 114.
[76] Ibid., Act 27, 122.
[77] Ibid., Act 32, p. 141.
[78] Ibid., Act 33, P. 148.

*The **flowers** are swaying* [79]

NUN.

Her stocking is woven with the pink,
It is traced with the green,
*The leaves and **flower** are finely knitted.* [80]

LADY YANG.

*The court **flowers** all become heart-breaking twigs,*
The deserted door-curtains drop to the ground. [81]

LADY YANG.

No one ascends the painted tower,
*No **flowers** open in pairs any longer.* [82]

LI GUINIAN.

*On the Dragon Pond, the **lotus blossom** fully opened,*
He caressed the beauty in the Limpid Pool,
*They enjoyed the **flowers on Calyx Terrace**.* [83]

LI MU.

*The **flowers** attract the visitors' eyes,*
The spring touches the sadness of the old country. [84]

LI GUINIAN.

On Horse Mount, the rainbow came after the snow,
*In Dragon Pond, **lotus blossom fully opened**,*
He caressed the beauty in the Limpid Pool, . . . [85]

GENTLEMAN A.

Walking at leisure,
*Looking for the **flower**,*
I cherish the lovely spring; [86]

LI GUINIAN.

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[79] Ibid., Act 34, p. 151.
[80] Ibid., Act 36, p. 160.
[81] Ibid., Act 37, p. 162.
[82] Ibid., Act 37, p. 163.
[83] Ibid., Act 38, p. 168.
[84] Ibid., Act 38, p. 168.
[85] Ibid., Act 38, P. 168.
[86] Ibid., Act 38, p. 169.

He rewarded her with pins and casket in person,
And made her the first ***flower*** *in the court.*[87]

LI GUINIAN.
Flowers *lose to her cheeks and willow twigs to her waist.*[88]

LI GUINIAN.
They consumed mutual pleasure
In front of the ***flowers*** *or beneath the moon.*[89]

LI GUINIAN.
Like a spring under the ***flowers*** *flowing into a brook in the valley, . . .*[90]

LI GUINIAN.
Nobody will pass by the wilderness again,--
Who will lament the withered ***pear blossom****?*[91]

LI GUINIAN.
In the courtyards,
Half of the willows and ***flowers*** *have faded.*[92]

NIANNU.
Facing the sun and before the ***flowers,***
We learn to recite the sacred scripts.[93]

YONGXIN and NIANNU.
The shadows of the dusts are playing with the sunlight,
The divine ***flowers*** *fall everywhere in the air.*[94]

NIANNU. Ah, the peony at the foot of the steps opens **a flower** in the rain! This kind of flower was our Lady's favourite. Shall we pick it and offer it up to her memorial tablet? [95]

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[87] Ibid., Act 38, p. 169.
[88] Ibid., Act 38, p. 170.
[89] Ibid., Act 38, p. 170.
[90] Ibid., Act 38, p. 171.
[91] Ibid., Act 38, P. 172.
[92] Ibid., Act 38, p. 172.
[93] Ibid., Act 39, p. 175.
[94] Ibid., Act 39, p. 175.
[95] Ibid., Act 39, P. 176.

YONGXIN and NIANNU.
*The dear **flower** is unmarred by any affliction,*
But the national beauty has returned all too early
to the Fountain down in the earth.[96]

LI GUINIAN.
On the road to the South of the River,
*I casually tread **flowers** and grass.*
*Among the **flowers**,*
The rain stains sightseers' clothes.[97]

YONGXIN and NIANNU.
*We will meet you again in the **season when flowers fall**.*[98]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
Verdant, verdant
*Is the pear tree in **blossom**.*[99]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
*Her former **flowery image** and fragrant flesh have gone into the void,*
What remains is only a hollow grave. [100]

COWHERD.
*The garnet **flowers** surround the embroidered screen,*[101]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
In rapture, I heard
*The **flower-like beauty** remains alive in the human world,*[102]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG. (Crying.) Oh, my darling! I cannot bid --
*The elegance of the **flower** to emerge,*
The elegance of the moon to emerge, . . .[103]

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[96] Ibid., Act 39, P. 176.
[97] Ibid., Act 39, P. 176.
[98] Ibid., Act 39, P. 178.
[99] Ibid., Act 43, P. 187.
[100] Ibid., Act 39, p. 189.
[101] Ibid., Act 40, p. 192.
[102] Ibid., Act 45, p. 196.
[103] Ibid., Act 45, p. 197.

NECROMANCER.
*These **flowers** are neither the same as that for Cautama, . . .*[104]

NECROMANCER.
Demonstrating magic,
*I'll graft the **withered flower** back noto the lovesick twig,*
Utilising shamanism,
*I'll ensure the fallen **blossom will open anew***
On the twin stems of the same lotus.[105]

NECROMANCER.
Under the dim stars and the gloomy moon,
*Her **flowery figure** is never seen.*[106]

NECROMANCER.
*Though the **flower no longer opens fresh**,*
He wishes her fragrant soul would come back.[107]

NECROMANCER.
Over the vast land of the peach trees,
*I can't single out the area of **flowers**.*[108]

NECROMANCER.
*I can't re-create the **charming flower***
Which has overturned the nation
Can't make her rosy face appear once more.[109]

NECROMANCER.
***A flower** must have roots and the river a source.*[110]

LADY YANG.
Tragically,
*The moon fell and the **flower** was plucked.*[111]

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[104] Gautama, the surname of Sakyamuni. He showed a flower to the congregation before his sermon, but nobody understood what he meant except Kasyapa who showed his comprehension by smiling. Ibid., Act 46, p. 200.
[105] Ibid., Act 46, P. 200.
[106] Ibid., Act 46, P. 200.
[107] Ibid., Act 46, P. 204.
[108] Ibid., Act 46, p. 205.
[109] Ibid., Act 46, P. 204.
[110] Ibid., Act 46, p. 205.

FAIRY.
*Who's come under **the blossoms** ringing at the copper knockers?*[112]

NECROMANCER.
*In front of the **lotus blossom**,*
The persons' faces are all different;[113]

LADY YANG.
*The moon has waned and the **flowers** are pallid;*[114]

CHORUS.
*The **cassia blossom** is blooming at its best,*
The many-hued dews are just at their freshest.[115]

EMPEROR MINGHUANG.
The jade was smashed,
*The **flower** was damaged,*
All owing to my weakness and the declining of the times.[116]

LADY YANG.
*The jade was crushed under the **pear blossom**,*
The broken spirit followed the cuckoo.[117]

MOON MAIDEN.
*Amidst the **cassia blossoms** is a pair of angels, . . .*[118]

WEAVING DAMSEL.
In front of you
*Were always the **visions of flowers** and the illusory shadows, . . .*[119]

FAIRIES.

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[111] Ibid., Act 47, p. 209.
[112] Ibid., Act 48, p. 212.
[113] Ibid., Act 48, P. 212.
[114] Ibid., Act 48, p. 213.
[115] Ibid., Act 50, P. 218.
[116] Ibid., Act 50, p. 220.
[117] Ibid., Act 50, P. 220.
[118] Ibid., Act 50, P. 222.
[119] Ibid., Act 50, P. 222.

*Shining their **red pistils**,*
***Flowers** open embracing the wind;*[120]

FAIRIES.
*The **lotus blossom** should be laid on the floor,*
On which we are lightly dancing.[121]

[120] Ibid., Act 50, p. 223.
[121] Ibid., Act 50, P. 223.

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